PLAYS OF TO-DAY

SECOND VOLUME

Prunella.
The New Sin.
The Tragedy of
Pompey the Great.
Mary Broome.
Rutherford & Son.

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Plays of To-Day:
Second Volume

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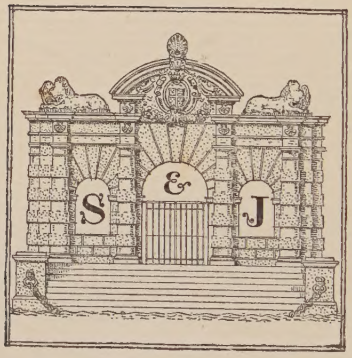

London: Sidgwick and Jackson, Ltd.

Second Volume

PRUNELLA by Laurence Housman and Granville-Barker.

THE NEW SIN by B. Macdonald Hastings.

POMPEY THE GREAT by John Masefield.

MARY BROOME by Allan Monkhouse.

RUTHERFORD AND SON by Githa Sowerby.

44 Museum Street, W.C.1.

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First issued, 1925.

PRUNELLA: OR, LOVE IN A DUTCH GARDEN

LAURENCE HOUSMAN

AND

H. GRANVILLE-BARKER

PLAYS by LAURENCE HOUSMAN

[For list of Plays by H. GRANVILLE-BARKER, see First Volume.]

BETHLEHEM : A NATIVITY PLAY.

Produced by Gordon Craig at the University of London, South Kensington, December 1902. Licence refused by Lord Chamberlain, 1902 ; licence granted, 1921. (Published by Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1902.)

THE CHINESE LANTERN.

Produced at the Haymarket Theatre, London, June 1908. (Published by F. Sidgwick (now by Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd.), 1908.)

PAINS AND PENALTIES : the Defence of Queen Caroline.

Produced by the Pioneer Players, Savoy Theatre, London, November 1912. Licence refused by the Lord Chamberlain, 1910 ; licence granted, 1922. (Published by Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd., 1911.)

PRUNELLA : OR, LOVE IN A DUTCH GARDEN.

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THE WHEEL : Apollo in Hades ; The Death of Alcestis ; The Doom of Admetus.

(Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd., 1919.)

THE DEATH OF ORPHEUS.

(Same publishers, 1921.)

LITTLE PLAYS OF ST. FRANCIS : a Dramatic Cycle.

Eighteen one-act plays : some produced at the Glastonbury Festivals, 1924–5 ; others elsewhere. (Same publishers, 1922.)

FOLLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS : Four Plays of the Early Franciscan Legend.

(Same publishers, 1923.)

THE DEATH OF SOCRATES.

(Same publishers, 1925.)

PRUNELLA

was produced at the Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Square, London, on December 23, 1904.

PIERROT	Granville Barker.
SCARAMEL	Harry Dodd.
KENNEL	Reginald Rivington.
CALLOW	John W. Deverell.
MOUTH	Orlando Barnett.
HAWK	George Trollope.
TAWDRY	Helen Grenville.
DOLL	Margaret Bussé.
ROMP	Florence Redfern.
COQUETTE	Hazel Thompson.
PRIM	Violet Vaughan.
PRIVACY	Nora Greenlaw.
PRUDE	Agnes Hill.
QUEER	Emily Grove.
QUAINT	Alice Arden.
1st Gardener	Tom Paulton.
2nd Gardener	T. Heslewood.
3rd Gardener	F. Cremlin.
BOY	Norman Page.
STATUE OF LOVE	Lewis Casson.
PRUNELLA	Thyrza Norman.

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The Music of the play (by Joseph Moorat) is published by Messrs. Elkin & Co., 20 Kingly Street, Regent Street, London, W.

PRUNELLA

ACT I

SCENE: *A garden enclosed by high hedges cut square. To the right a statue of* LOVE, *with viol and bow, stands over a fountain. To the left is a house with prim windows, the centre one projecting over a porch in which hangs a caged canary. The three gardeners are discovered at work, trimming the hedges and nailing up creepers. Behind the farther hedge the* BOY'S *voice is heard.*

BOY. O you naughty, naughty birds, now will you
Come into my garden, and I'll kill you!

1ST GARDENER. Well, what d'you say the weather's going to be?

2ND GARDENER. Weather ain't up to much, it seems to me.

3RD GARDENER. It's up to mischief, though:
Making things grow
A deal too fast.
These hedges—since we cut 'em last—
Don't seem
As if they know'd as a straight line could mean
Anything! No; they're all elbows and knees,
Perking 'emselves about just as they please!
Oneasy things be trees!

BOY. O you naughty little pests, now fly, please!
Don't come making nests in my trees!

1ST GARDENER. Well, what's to be done now?

2ND GARDENER. I thought as how—
While we was on it, gettin' things to shape—

'T might be a good plan just to give a scrape
To this old fountain.

3RD GARDENER. Ah! you thought that? Well,
Then don't you do it!

2ND GARDENER. Oh! why not?

3RD GARDENER. *I* tell
You—don't you do it! 't 's not to be touched, so there!

2ND GARDENER. Well, it can rot then!

3RD GARDENER. You haven't been here
So long as I have! if you had you'd know.

2ND GARDENER. Oh, indeed, oh? [BOY *throws cap.*]
Now then! now then!

BOY. Please, Mister Gardener, I
Was only throwing it at a butterfly!

3RD GARDENER. Then just you leave the butterflies alone.
They mind their business—and you mind your own!
It's scaring birds is what you've got to do.

BOY. They's scared enough now, Mister;—they seed you
Come into the garden.

3RD GARDENER. Eh? look 'ere, look 'ere!
You keep that sauce for your own chop! D'ye hear?
Now come and pick this rag up! Don't be slow!
What's coming to the boy now I don't know.

1ST GARDENER. It's just his youth.

3RD GARDENER. His youth! Hi! Here a minute!
Closer . . that pocket there . . what you got in it?

BOY. Got? What?

3RD GARDENER. Why, this. This 'at!

1ST GARDENER. Lord love yer, look at that!

BOY. 'A picked it up.

3RD GARDENER. Picked it up, did you? Where?

BOY. Please, Mr. Gardener, down—down at the fair.

3RD GARDENER. Oh, so it's the fair you've been to, have you, then?

BOY. Yes, please, Mr. Gardener, I went—but I—I come back agen.

3RD GARDENER. Who was it told you to go?

BOY. Please, Mister, I—
I went to see the mummers.

1ST GARDENER. Mummers? My!

3RD GARDENER. And you been brought up so respectable,
And b'longing here! What did you go for?

BOY. Well,—
You see they was going away to-day, some one told me—
And I just couldn't 'elp it! I just 'ad to see
If they was like—like what I'd thought they'd be,
An' oh, they was, they was and more so! There
Was a lot of 'orses and ponies, all polished-shinin', just like my 'air
Of a Sunday; an' acrobats, pink-in-the-skin, an' clowns
All tumbling about! and ladies, oh!—what had gowns
Too short for their legs! and, my word, didn't they kick!
And there was a lot of fiddlers fiddling so quick
You couldn't stop to breathe for listening; and fairies with wings,
And folk what had sugar-plum things
Stuck all over them! Oh, and they played
The fool to the life!

1ST GARDENER. Did they now—did they?

3RD GARDENER. Well?

BOY. Made you feel you wished you was silly yourself —like as you was ever so.

3RD GARDENER. Well?

BOY. Then—then I come away.

3RD GARDENER. Then, now you—

Points him back to his work.

BOY. Yes, Mister Gardener.

3RD GARDENER. Head Gardener.

BOY. 'Ead Gardener.

1ST GARDENER. Oh, I've seed life in my time too!
3RD GARDENER. Yes. An' you just encourage that boy.
1ST GARDENER. *I* do?
3RD GARDENER. I'm feared at 'eart you're unregenerate,
Jeremy!
2ND GARDENER. Ah! what was you up by the gate
So long about this morning?
1ST GARDENER. I?
2ND GARDENER. —If not
To see them mummers pass; more'n one lot
Went by wi' a band just about breakfast-time.
1ST GARDENER. Ay, so they did.
2ND GARDENER. And you there?
1ST GARDENER. Eh! Well, I'm
Fond of a bit of music and a game.
3RD GARDENER. What, at your age? O Jeremy, think shame
Of harbouring of such thoughts!
2ND GARDENER. [*sniffing*.] Ah, ha!
3RD GARDENER. Well?
What are ye up to there, my Samuel?
What's come on you?
2ND GARDENER. There's summat I can smell
The shape of here!
3RD GARDENER. What sort of shape'll it be?
2ND GARDENER. Our dinner! Pigs'-pudding!
3RD GARDENER. Good!
1ST GARDENER. Ay! though for me—
I prefer chitterlings.
3RD GARDENER. Ah! I don't know!
I dunno. Chitterlings in their place don't go
So bad; but if you was to ask me straight
What I'd have first, if it should be my fate.
To die to-morrow, why I think I'd most

Choose tripe and onions!

1ST GARDENER. Peter, add a roast
Potato, and I'm with you!

BOY. Please, misters, say,
Ain't 'am and eggs your notion of heaven?

3RD GARDENER. Eh?
My notion is you'd better get on away
Back to your work—wasting your time all day
Listening to what's not meant for your ears!

2ND GARDENER. Well!
That talk's made me feel sorry for mysel'—
Hungry. How goes the time?

3RD GARDENER. It ain't nigh twelve.
Not yet. [*Sighs.*]

Enter QUEER, *carrying small table.*

2ND GARDENER. Oh, good-morning, ma'am,—miss, I should say.

QUEER. No, you shouldn't: you should wait till you're spoken to!

3RD GARDENER. Quite right, Mrs. Queer! Patcher, learn your place!

QUEER. I didn't ask you to speak!

3RD GARDENER. You did not, Mrs. Queer, but the sweetness of your looks tempted me to hutter a hobservation.

QUEER. Ha!

QUEER *arranges things and exit abruptly.*

2ND GARDENER. What's put her out?

3RD GARDENER. Thought of old times, maybe!

2ND GARDENER. Eh, but she needn't vent it off on me.

1ST GARDENER. Here! did she have
Her disappointments ever?

3RD GARDENER. I don't know.
I don't know.

2ND GARDENER. Ah, you've your suspicions, though!

1ST GARDENER. When did it happen?

3RD GARDENER. If it did happen—and I don't say so—
But yet I don't say no—'twas at the time
When that French gentleman-gardener come along,—
Him as put up that fountain. It was then
As most things happened that ever happened here.

1ST GARDENER. Oh, ho, so that's how it come? What does it mean?

2ND GARDENER. That stands for Cupid. Cupid's the French for love.

Re-enter QUEER.

QUEER. In a few minutes' time your mistresses
Are coming to sit here: and they'll expect
Quiet and no disturbance while Miss Prunella
Is doing her lessons. Mister Gardeners,
You had better begin to work! it's getting late!

Exit.

3RD GARDENER. Ah, she don't like our looking at this here . . No . .
Yes, as I say, 'twas that French artist chap—
" Gardener architect " as he called hisself—
Who put that up. Well, it was never any
Affair of mine.

1ST GARDENER. And what else did he do?

3RD GARDENER. Well,—we don't make a boast of it, you see,—
But it was *'e*
Run off with the youngest of 'em—Miss what's-'er-name?
—With Miss Prunella's mother, as she became.

1ST GARDENER. O-oh! Was Miss Prunella his daughter, then?

3RD GARDENER. I don't know.

2ND GARDENER. What—didn't they marry when—
When—er—

3RD GARDENER. I dunno.

1ST GARDENER. Come, out with, man!
What do you know?

3RD GARDENER. Well, twenty years ago,
That Frenchman, he come here ; and he began
Chopping and changing, doing things on his own—
Improving what he'd better have left alone,
If you ask me. 'Twas he put on the shelf
That graven-image o' Cupid—carved it himself :
And—Miss—Priscilla—

2ND GARDENER. Ah !

3RD GARDENER. She used to come
And watch him at it.

1ST GARDENER. Oh ! so that was how !

3RD GARDENER. Ah ! that was it. Then she grows
pale and thin,
And melancholy-like ;—you know the way
That sort of thing takes people—walked about
With a book in her hand, holding it upside down
Pretending to be reading of it—watching him.

2ND GARDENER. And he a-watching her ?

3RD GARDENER. Ay, ay ! Before
He made the sign, she was in love with him,
And just as full of it as any goose
Is with the stuffing.

1ST GARDENER. Did nobody find out ?

3RD GARDENER. Ah, p'r'aps Miss Privacy knew—
Or guessed : but she was soft—she didn't say
Anything to the others. And then, one day,
Just when the statue was finished—she and him—
Miss Priscy and her Frenchman-architect—
Took and run off together. No one knows
What happened after that.

2ND GARDENER. Well, they must know
Something : or where does Miss Prunella come in ?

3RD GARDENER. She come
Just a year afterwards, as small and young
As they make 'em—found lying at the door
Tied up in black ribbon, with a letter written

By Miss Priscilla just before she died,
Saying the child was hers. But more than that
I don't know, I don't know.

2ND GARDENER. Well, a poor business that was, to be sure!

And what for, eh? for love!—Cupidity!
" Stupidity " *I* call it. I love my love
With a D—I want my dinner!

1ST GARDENER. So that's where Miss Prunella gets her ways,
Is it? Why there! I've seen her hanging round
That fountain by the *h*our, all sad and pale
And star-gazing at nothing :—just as you say
Her mother used to do.

3RD GARDENER. Oh, ay! she's like
Her mother : a deal too like her to please me.
If we don't look out, she'll go falling in love
With the first pretty fellow she sets eyes upon ;
And then the deuce to pay!

BOY. Please, Mister Gardener, I saw Miss Prunella looking at me yesterday—the saddest, sorrowfullest look you ever saw. It made me blush all down into my clothes. Oh!

Breaks off.

Enter PRUNELLA. *She is studying a book and carrying a satchel of work on her arm. Occasionally she half closes her book, and raises her head to mutter a piece off by heart; then halts and looks down again.*

1ST *and* 2ND GARDENERS *go round hedge.*

BOY. Oh, hark, naughty birds, what I'll do t' you ;
Go out of my garden, or I'll shoot you!

PRUNELLA. [*repeating each line twice over.*]

Not to allow my thoughts to stray—
Not to allow my thoughts to stray
Beyond the duties of each day—
Beyond the duties of each day :

Thus only can I hope to be—
Thus only can I hope to be
A type of maiden modesty—
A type of maiden modesty.

Now I know that.

3RD GARDENER. Hem!

PRUNELLA. What are you doing there?

3RD GARDENER. Giving Nature a lesson, miss.

PRUNELLA. What are you teaching her?

3RD GARDENER. To keep straight! I'll let her know who's master while I'm here.

PRUNELLA. And if you didn't, what would happen?

3RD GARDENER. Why, she'd kick over the traces and be off her own way in no time. She's bad enough as it is, always getting herself [*clips*] out of shape, and trying to be different to what you make her. [*Clips.*] Well, that you can't help, you've just got to come along and put it right. [*Clips.*] First she'll run to leaf—that you can't help—then she'll run to seed—that you can't help—then she goes stalky [*clips*]—rots herself—dies and stinks. None of it you can't help.

PRUNELLA. What can you do, then?

3RD GARDENER. Oh, you—you—can make things uncomfortable for her; you can show her what she ought to be, and keep her in her place—make her toe the line. That's what a garden's for, that's where gardening comes in.

PRUNELLA. Oh dear! here are my aunts already!

3RD GARDENER. Yes, miss.

PRUNELLA. Lessons! I'm sure I'm growing too old for lessons.

3RD GARDENER. No, miss—no one grows too old for lessons.

Enter PRIM, PRIVACY, *and* PRUDE, *followed by* QUEER *and* QUAINT. *The* GARDENERS *retire behind hedge, and commence to work.*

PRIM. Prunella, it is lesson-time. Are all your lessons learned ?

PRUNELLA. Yes, Aunt Prim.

PRIVACY. Quaint, is the outer gate shut ?

QUAINT. Yes, ma'am.

PRUNELLA *stands apart conning her lesson.*

PRUDE. Indeed, I hope so ; to-day it's very necessary. You had better double-lock it, and draw down all the blinds looking towards the road.

PRUNELLA. Why, Aunt Prue, people will think there's some one dead in the house !

PRUDE. They had better do so, Prunella, if it will induce them to moderate their conduct while passing our premises. I have already beheld more than I care to recount to you.

PRIVACY. I heard a disturbance outside.

PRUNELLA. [*leaning forward with a little curiosity.*] Oh, yes—

PRIM. Prunella, deport yourself !

PRIVACY. [*to* QUAINT.] You had better bring me the key of the gate.

QUAINT. Yes, ma'am.

Exit.

PRIM. [*to* QUEER.] To-day we shall not be at home to any one.

PRUDE. Who will call ? No one can venture into the streets.

PRUNELLA. Why can't they, Aunt Prude ?

PRUDE. Never mind, Prunella !

PRIM. Tell the gardeners to see that nobody intrudes.

Exit QUEER.

BOY. O you naughty, naughty birds, now will you
Come into my garden, and I'll kill you !

QUAINT *returns with the key, and exit into house.*

PRUNELLA *wanders towards the hedge.*

PRIM. Prunella, get your needlework,

And bring your little chair :
Assume the task you wish to shirk,
And come and sit down here !

GARDENERS. [*looking round hedge.*]

And go and sit down there !

PRUDE. But please to do it decently,
No, do not cross your feet ;
These habits have come recently.
Correct them, I entreat !

GARDENERS. [*as before.*]

Correct them, we entreat !

PRIVACY. Count ten before you say a thing,
Think of each word you use,
Be careful how you weigh a thing,
And mind your P's and Q's.

GARDENERS. And mind your—

Clock strikes "Cuckoo" twelve times. The GARDENERS *stop speaking and begin to count on their fingers and feet.*

BOY. [*behind hedge.*] O you naughty, naughty birds, now—oof ! . .

A dinner-bell is heard.

3RD GARDENER. Dinner !

2ND GARDENER. Dinner !

1ST GARDENER. Dinner !

BOY *runs past.*

2ND GARDENER. That boy gone—forward as usual !

Exeunt.

PRUDE. Prunella, regulate yourself !

PRIM. It is time to begin lessons. Have you learned your verses? [PRUNELLA *hands the book.*] You had better stand while you recite.

PRUNELLA. What is my task to-day ? Behold
The dawn arises decked in gold ;
Bird, beast, and fish awake to run
Their daily rounds beneath the sun.

Shall I alone neglect to ask
The frightful question, " What's my—"

PRIM. Vital question.

PRUNELLA. Shall I alone neglect to ask
The vital question, " What's my task ? "
Ah, no ! the Power which placed me here,
Directs me still to persevere ;
To find, removed from dust and heat,
Materials for a life complete,
And to pursue with taste subdued
The gentle paths of rectitude ;
To keep my temper well controlled,
To be content—do as I'm told,
Not to allow—

PRUDE. Prunella, retreat the sash !

PRIM. " Not to allow "—continue, Prunella !

PRUNELLA. Not to allow . .
To keep my temper well controlled,
To be content—do as I'm told,
Not to allow—
Oh, I've forgotten it all now ! Retreating the sash put it all out of my head.

PRIM. You must learn it again.

PRIVACY. Prunella, I have not known this happen before ! You had better carry the book indoors. Bring " The Gentle Reader " with you when you return.

Exit PRUNELLA.

PRIM. Do you think she has noticed anything ?

PRIVACY. Seen anything ? Oh, I hope not.

PRUDE. I think it possible.

PRIVACY. I fancy the fair must be breaking up to-day.

PRUDE. Three or four bodies of the rabble have already passed along the road.

PRIM. Our road ?

PRUDE. I heard—I almost saw them. I'm sure it is a death-trap to any young girl's modesty to look out of window while such characters are abroad.

PRIM. Hadn't we better all go indoors? We are too close to the road here.

PRUDE. But we must be careful not to be abrupt or to seem purposeless. If we made any sudden move, Prunella's curiosity might be aroused.

PRIM. I think it is aroused already.

PRUDE. Well, she certainly showed a peculiar intelligence about the blinds. She seemed to me to wish to have them up.

PRUNELLA *returns from the house.*

PRIVACY. Hush! here she comes.

PRIM. I observe a strange agitation in her manner.

PRUDE. She's concealing something.

The MUMMERS' *music in the distance.*

PRIM. Privacy—there are the mummers again!

PRIVACY. Dear me! But quite in the distance.

PRIM. But she'll hear them—she must—

PRUDE. She's taking notice—she's taking notice!

PRIVACY. Oh, distract her attention!

PRIM. How?

PRUDE. Make conversation!

PRIM. Ah!—it's the gardeners' dinner-hour—

PRIVACY. They will have finished soon.

PRUDE. It looks as if there'd be a shower
This afternoon.

PRIM. I hope you put away your books?

PRUNELLA. Yes.

PRIM. Closed the drawer again?

PRUNELLA. Yes.

PRIM. Quite sure?

PRUNELLA. Yes.

PRUDE. It really looks
As if there would be rain.

PRIM. Prunella, do not cross your feet,
Don't turn them so much out!

PRUDE. Really I do think from the heat
Thunder must be about.

A slight pause.

PRIM. Ah! They have passed by.

PRIVACY. Dear child, she has noticed nothing.

PRUDE. Innocence is a beautiful thing, Privacy.

PRIM *yawns.*

PRUDE. Really, Prim!

PRIM. I am sorry—I think it is more nervousness than fatigue.

PRUDE. Reading, Prunella!—Open your "Gentle Reader." Turn to "The Moon." No—no, Prunella—do not waste your energy in turning pages. Discover the whereabouts of the passage by means of the Index—placed in the book for that purpose.

PRIVACY *yawns.*

PRUDE. Oh, Privacy!

PRIVACY. I beg your pardon.

PRUDE. [*to* PRUNELLA.] Have you found "The Moon"?

PRUNELLA. Yes, Aunt.

PRUDE. Then begin. Read slowly and sit straight. [*She starts a yawn, but checks it.*] No—'twas not yawning.

PRUNELLA. "The Moon. To-day, gentle reader, we will look at the moon, in order to consider its character, its condition, and its constituents, so far as they are known. The moon is much larger than the uninstructed would suppose; it is nearly a quarter of a million miles away from our globe, which will give you some idea of its size. Thus the fastest crow would take nearly four years to fly from here to the moon, without any pause for refreshment by the way, and the kingly eagle would not accomplish the task under three. Let facts like these, gentle reader, stir your wonder at Creation's mighty plan, and stimulate modesty at your own exceeding insignificance."

PRUDE. "Modesty," Prunella; you had better make a note.

PRUNELLA. [*makes a note.*] "The moon has from time immemorial been the subject of foolish fables, all of which are untrue. The fact that the contours of its surface somewhat resemble the human countenance has given rise to an ignorant superstition that the moon contains a man. Gentle reader, there is no man in the moon, nor is it in the least probable that any form of life can exist there. It is true that the moon presents to our eyes only one-half of its surface; no one has ever seen the farther side of the moon."

PRIM. Prunella, why do you stop reading?

PRUNELLA. No one has ever seen the farther side of the moon! "It is probably just the same in all respects as the one we know. [*The* AUNTS *begin to nod.*] The moon completes the circuit of the earth once in every lunar month. If uninfluenced by superior gravity the moon, once started, would have gone on in a straight line for ever; any change that has come about is proportional to the earth's attraction, and lies in the direction of that attraction. [*Distant music comes nearer;* PRUNELLA *stops to listen and goes on again. The* AUNTS *sleep.*] The earth influences the moon, attracting it by its superior gravity. Once it formed a part of the earth, but breaking away, it chose a course of its own and lost all its heat and vitality. The moon may, therefore, fitly be held up as an object lesson to all young people. It once committed a rash act for which it is now paying the penalty."

Music again comes nearer; on the other side of the hedge are voices and laughter. PRUNELLA *stops to listen. Over the hedge a shower of confetti falls upon the sleeping* AUNTS. PRUNELLA *turns in timid alarm. Outside a toy bugle is blown on two notes rather like a cuckoo, and a drum is banged.*

PRUDE. [*awakening.*] What was that noise?

PRUNELLA. I don't know.

More noise without.

PRIM. Oh! oh! Those dreadful people!

Enter QUEER *and* QUAINT *running.*

QUEER *and* QUAINT. O ma'am, ma'am, ma'am. The mummers are going by! They've been throwing up at the windows and knocking at the gate, and there are lots more of them coming up the road.

PRIVACY. Come, let us go in at once.

PRIM. We must retire.

PRUDE. Queer, Quaint, bring in the chairs!

PRIVACY. Prunella, my dear, don't sit so! Get up!

PRUNELLA *gets up all in a dream; her lap is full of needlework, thimbles, scissors, etc., which fall upon the ground.*

PRIM. Tut! tut! what carelessness! Gather them up quickly, and come!

Another blast outside.

PRUDE. Oh-h-h! [*Runs.*]

Exeunt the AUNTS.

QUEER *and* QUAINT *pick up the chairs.*

QUEER. What are you going to do?

QUAINT. I'm going to pull down the top-floor blinds. I won't have people looking into my room.

QUEER. [*with understanding of what opportunity a top window affords.*] Ah! And I believe my window is open. Ignorance ain't innocence; it's well to know these things—then you can avoid 'em.

PRIVACY. [*returning.*] Prunella, I have dropped the gate key. Find it and bring it in. Then retire to your room and stay there till you are sent for.

Exit PRIVACY. PRUNELLA *prepares to follow, takes up the key, then after a moment's hesitation gets on her stool and looks over the hedge. Through the bottom of the hedge creeps* PIERROT. *Half-way through he stops.*

PIERROT. Cuckoo!

PRUNELLA *looks down and sees him. There is a long pause.*

PRUNELLA. Was it you made that noise just now?

PIERROT. [*nodding and smiling at her*]. Nice noise, wasn't it?

PRUNELLA *shakes her head very seriously. He comes right through the hedge.*

PRUNELLA. [*scared.*] Naughty white boy, you must go away!

PIERROT. No, pretty Dutch doll, let me stay!

PRUNELLA. You mustn't call me names.

PIERROT. You called me names.

PRUNELLA. I didn't.

PIERROT. You did—a horrid, nasty name.

PRUNELLA. [*approaching him, half fascinated.*] Tell me—what in the world are you?

PIERROT. [*going on his knees in a mock attitude of prayer and talking very fast, as if in a great hurry to tell his tale and get pardon for intruding.*] Oh, I'm nothing: I'm nothing in the world but a poor Pierrot. I'm an orphan, I haven't got a home, I haven't got a friend, I haven't got a leg to stand on, I haven't got a bed to sleep in, I haven't had a bit to eat, and I haven't had a drop to drink for three whole hours. [*Changing his manner, seeing that he has made an impression on her.*] There, now you know all about me,—as much as I know myself, almost. Oh, I'm so giddy, I can't stand. If you don't look sweet at me, I shall be dead in a minute.

PRUNELLA. But how did you come here? Who are you?

PIERROT. Dropped like a bird. I'm the man in the moon.

PRUNELLA. Don't be silly. There's no man in the moon. I've been taught that.

PIERROT. Ah! Don't you believe all the things you're told!

PRUNELLA. But that's in a book.

PIERROT. Never read books. *I* never do.

PRUNELLA. Don't you learn things?

PIERROT. I know all that's worth knowing. And now I'll tell you something. [*Draws nearer and looks into her eyes while he points to himself.*] The moon has a round face, two eyes, a nose, and a mouth. That's science. You thought I didn't exist; but—I've come true. That often happens.

PRUNELLA. But why did you come here at all?

PIERROT. Looked at you through the hedge till my heart beat a hole in it! Now I've lost it.

PRUNELLA. What?

PIERROT. My heart.

PRUNELLA. How?

PIERROT. Flown! Up into that tree, just over your head. Can't you hear it crying "Sweet, sweet, sweet!" like a hungry bird, eh? Throw it a crumb! Throw it a crumb! There! did you hear that?

PRUNELLA. [*shaking her head incredulously.*] Why don't you call it back again?

PIERROT. Ah! it won't come to my calling—not now! But if you were to call, if you were to say, "Sweetheart, sweetheart, come!" why, I shouldn't wonder—

PRUNELLA. Oh, you oughtn't to be here, you must go away.

PIERROT. Why must I?

PRUNELLA. Because nobody like you ever comes here.

PIERROT. Would you like them to come?

PRUNELLA. Them! Is there any one else like you in the world?

PIERROT. One or two. You don't believe it? I'm flattered. But truth before all things. I'll prove it. [*Whistles.*] Scaramel! Scaramel! But not quite like me—we are rather a mixed lot, we aren't all as white as we are painted.

Enter SCARAMEL.

Here is one now! My man Scaramel. Do you not see the likeness?

SCARAMEL. At your service, if it's my master's.

PRUNELLA. What does he mean by that?

PIERROT. That's his creed—it's what he lives by.

PRUNELLA. He's not like you at all. I don't like him.

PIERROT. But that's rather foolish. For if every one were just like me, you'd see too much of me, then.

SCARAMEL. Master, she's very young.

PIERROT. Well?

SCARAMEL. Otherwise charming as usual.

PRUNELLA. Oh, please send him away! If you will send him away you may stay—just for a little.

PIERROT. What's that you have in your hand?

PRUNELLA. A key.

PIERROT. It's a very pretty key. May I look at it? Keys fascinate me. I like to guess what they open.

PRUNELLA. Oh, yes.

Hands him the key.

PIERROT. Now this isn't a watch key.

SCARAMEL. Nor a bed key.

PIERROT. It's not a small key.

SCARAMEL. No; it's a large key.

PRUNELLA. It's the key of the garden gate.

PIERROT. Is it really? Scaramel, this is the key of the garden gate. Well, a gate has its uses, eh, Scaramel? Ah!

SCARAMEL *runs off with the key.*

PRUNELLA. Thank you for sending him off.

PIERROT. Don't mention it, pray.

PRUNELLA. But what have you done with the key?

PIERROT. Didn't you see me put it down my back to prevent my nose bleeding?

PRUNELLA. Was your nose bleeding?

PIERROT. Child, child, I said to prevent it bleeding.

Let us talk of something else. I don't like this place. It's too straight. I don't like it.

PRUNELLA. It's my home.

PIERROT. Do you love it?

PRUNELLA. Why—yes.

PIERROT. Why has your house shut its eyes? That's wilfully foolish. Now I'll tell you a story about a house I once knew—very like this.

PRUNELLA. Really like this?

PIERROT. Where somebody lived very like you.

PRUNELLA. Some one like me?

PIERROT. Asleep on the edge of a town
Where the high-road ran by,
Stood a house with the blinds all drawn down,
As if waiting to die.

And everything there was so straight
With high walls all about!
And a notice was up at the gate,
That told Love to keep out.

But Love cannot read—he is blind;
So he came there one day
And knocked; but the house was unkind,
It turned him away!

But lo, when the gates were all closed,
When the windows were fast,
At night while the householders dozed,
Love entered at last.

PRUNELLA. Oh, you recite quite nicely, better than I do.

PIERROT. Thank you, but I have a deal of practice.

Peals of laughter are heard outside and cries of "Pierrot! Pierrot! Pierrot!" which come nearer.

PRUNELLA. Oh, listen! What's this?

PIERROT. Friends of mine.
Here they come,
Look at 'em :
Rollicking, rackety !

Enter KENNEL, CALLOW, MOUTH, HAWK.

ALL FOUR. Here we come.
Look at us :
Rollicking, rackety !

KENNEL. Kennel !

CALLOW. Callow !

MOUTH. Mouth !

HAWK. Hawk !

Enter SCARAMEL.

PIERROT. Scaramel, good — you're an excellent servant.

KENNEL and CALLOW. Tawdry and Doll.

Enter TAWDRY *and* DOLL.

SCARAMEL. Here they are, pretty dears.

TAWDRY and DOLL. Here we are, pretty dears.

MOUTH and HAWK. Romp and Coquette !

Enter ROMP *and* COQUETTE.

ROMP and COQUETTE. Last through the gate.

PIERROT. Dance round me !

MOUTH. Jump, little Tawdry, jump so high !

DOLL. Here's a fine garden.

HAWK. Let's pull it to pieces.

COQUETTE. [*seeing* PRUNELLA.] Oh !

CALLOW, MOUTH, DOLL. Oh !

ALL. Oh !

PRUNELLA. [*quietly*.] Oh, you are funny !

PIERROT. These are my friends. Now attention : Callow !

CALLOW. Yes, I'm very young.

PIERROT. Doll !

DOLL. They say my heart's of sawdust.

PIERROT. Hawk !

HAWK. I pounce!
TAWDRY. Oh, not on me!
PIERROT. That's Tawdry—Mouth!
MOUTH. Greedy's my other name.
PIERROT. Romp!
ROMP. I'm the jolly girl.
PIERROT. Kennel, and Coquette!
KENNEL. I make no pretence to being nice.
COQUETTE. I'm here to waste his time.
PIERROT. Now, what's your name?
PRUNELLA. Of course I'm Prunella.
PIERROT. Well, I'm Pierrot.
ALL. Now you know.
PRUNELLA. Pierrot's a pretty name. [*She grows suddenly frightened.*] I think you'd better go away.
PIERROT. Oh, but that isn't polite of you.
PRUNELLA. I don't think my aunts would be pleased.
PIERROT. That shows their bad taste.
PRUNELLA. Oh, please go!—make haste!
PIERROT. No, we shan't.
PRUNELLA. Then I must.
Begins to run.
PIERROT. Catch my butterfly, catch my butterfly!
They circle round her.
ALL. Butterfly! Butterfly!
HAWK. No, you're a chrysalis.
ROMP. Wait till the sun warms.
CALLOW. Then you shall fly away.
TAWDRY. Fly with us—not from us.
PRUNELLA. Oh, please stop—you make me so giddy.
PIERROT. Scaramel, bring her to me!
PRUNELLA. Go right away! Oh, what do you want?
PIERROT. What do I want?
SCARAMEL. Master, what do you want?
ALL. What do we want?
PIERROT. Well, I'm hungry.

PRUNELLA. Oh, are you? I'm sorry. I'll fetch you some bread in a minute.

ALL. Bread—dry bread? Oh, no.

PRUNELLA. And butter.

SCARAMEL. Bread and butter, miss?

PRUNELLA. Well, cake.

PIERROT. Neither bread, nor butter, nor cake.

PRUNELLA. Then you can't be really hungry.

PIERROT. Call it thirst. My lips are dry. Give me —give me a kiss.

ALL. Give him, oh give him a kiss.

DOLL. Do give him a kiss.

SCARAMEL. You're to give him a kiss.

PRUNELLA. That won't cure hunger and thirst.

PIERROT. It'll cure my hunger and thirst.

PRUNELLA. A kiss?

PIERROT. Just a kiss.

PRUNELLA. But that's nothing. I kiss people often—regularly.

ALL. Regularly—oh!

SCARAMEL. Never do things regularly.

PIERROT. To love—it's everything.

PRUNELLA. To love?

ALL. Love.

PRUNELLA. What is making you look so unhappy?

PIERROT. Love.

PRUNELLA. Is it love that has made you so pale?

PIERROT. Just love!

The rest of the MUMMERS *begin to adapt themselves to his mood and come, stepping solemnly, and listen. Sad music is heard.*

PRUNELLA. Alas! How sad a sight you are in truth!
Is love a thief, that you have lost your youth?
Why, you have turned quite white:
Your very clothes would seem to share your grief!

PIERROT. Yes, they went white when I did.

PRUNELLA. When was that ?

PIERROT. Just now, when I first saw you from the other side of the hedge.

PRUNELLA. You went white then ?

PIERROT. As white as I could ; I wasn't nearly so white till I saw you. At times I was so black I ought to have been called Nero instead of Pierrot. Ah ! Now, don't be frightened—I wasn't quite black, just a little bit off colour here and there, a sort of magpie. You like magpies, don't you ?—women always do.

PRUNELLA. [*innocently.*] I never had a magpie.

PIERROT. Ah ! I wish I had you in my nest ! Oh-h !

As he leans towards her, PRUNELLA *instinctively draws back, and screens her face. Suddenly* PIERROT *falls into* SCARAMEL'S *arms.*

PRUNELLA. What's the matter ?

COQUETTE. He's going to faint.

TAWDRY. He has fainted.

DOLL. I think he's going to die.

ROMP. He's dead.

PRUNELLA. No, he isn't. Don't say such cruel things !

COQUETTE. Well, it will be your doing.

PRUNELLA. No, no !

DOLL. [*taking* PRUNELLA *by the arm, and pointing.*] Oh, poor Pierrot ! Look at him, look !

ALL. [*gather round, crying.*] O you poor, poor, poor Pierrot !

PIERROT *lies in* SCARAMEL'S *arms with eyes shut, and sighs.*

PIERROT. [*faintly.*] Yes, I hear what you are saying. That's me, that's me. Will nobody find me a remedy ?

PRUNELLA. Oh, do, do, somebody find him a remedy !

COQUETTE. Somebody ?

ALL. Find him a remedy somebody,
Somebody, somebody do !

From the way he's been taken,
Unless I'm mistaken,
That somebody ought to be you. [*To* PRUNELLA.]

What is his malady? Nobody,
Nobody, nobody knows;
Unless, by your pardon, [*To* PRUNELLA.]
You live in a garden,
With nothing that properly grows!

Find him a remedy somebody, etc.

They seize PRUNELLA, *and lead her up to him.*

PIERROT. Let her alone! Let her go!
Force is no remedy.

SCARAMEL. No.

PIERROT. So the story will never come true?

PRUNELLA. What do you want me to do?

PIERROT. The man in the moon
Came down too soon,
And lost his heart to a maiden;
With hunger and drouth,
She burnt his mouth,
And left him heavily laden.

DOLL.
TAWDRY. } Oh, cruel!
COQUETTE.

PRUNELLA. Do you mean me?

PIERROT. Kiss me; then you will see.

PRUNELLA. But why do you wish for it so?

PIERROT. Kiss me—then you will know.

ALL. Kiss him—then you will know.

She kisses him. He meets the kiss passionately, holding her fast. She is overwhelmed, breaks from him, and runs into the house.

PIERROT. And now—she knows.

A pause. COQUETTE *steals up to* PIERROT.

COQUETTE. Was it nice ?

PIERROT. Get away.

ROMP. O Callow—wilt and die, and I'll kiss you to life !

HAWK. Oh, I'm lost to this earth. Rescue me, Tawdry, with your cherry lips !

PIERROT. Scaramel, turn them away !

SCARAMEL. Pack, baggages, pack !

KENNEL. On the road again—master of my master ?

SCARAMEL. Yes. No, wait without.

DOLL. Well, since we've seen the show—

MOUTH. What a pretty piece of fooling !

SCARAMEL. Must I tell you twice ?

TAWDRY. Save me, Hawk !

HAWK. By all means, my pigeon.

Carries her off.

THE OTHERS. Back we go—off we go, etc.

They run off.

SCARAMEL. Master ! We are alone : we three.

PIERROT. We three ?

SCARAMEL. You, and I, and the Key.

PIERROT. The Key ?

SCARAMEL. It's the key of the garden gate.

PIERROT. What might it unlock for her !

SCARAMEL. Well, master — let's be getting on our way.

PIERROT. Once more.

SCARAMEL. I'll drop it here.

PIERROT. No, give it me !

SCARAMEL. Magic attends on us. This house has been blind and deaf. The magic's fading now.

PIERROT. [*to himself.*] To-night, to-night !

SCARAMEL. Did you speak ?

PIERROT. I am tempted—Scaramel.

SCARAMEL. Always yield to temptation.

PIERROT. Then to-night—

BOY. [*behind hedge.*] O you naughty, naughty birds,
now will you
Come into my garden, and I'll kill you !

PIERROT *pockets the key, and exit through hedge.*

O you naughty little pests, now fly, please !
Don't come making nests in my trees !

SCARAMEL *follows* PIERROT.

CURTAIN.

ACT II

The same scene, night-time. The moon is rising away to the right of the stage. Its light crosses the top of the hedge, and strikes the head of the fountain-statue. The sound of keys and locking of gates is heard. Two gardeners enter with lanterns and keys. All lights are out in the house.

1ST GARDENER. Ay, they are all abed.

2ND GARDENER. I'm about ready for mine.

1ST GARDENER. [*going off.*] It's going to be a clear night.

2ND GARDENER. Ay, full moon.

Exeunt.

Enter PIERROT *and* SCARAMEL.

PIERROT. Scaramel.

SCARAMEL. Master.

PIERROT. Have you a ladder about you?

SCARAMEL. No, master.

PIERROT. That is very careless, to come out at night without a ladder.

SCARAMEL. Master, doubtless one can be procured.

PIERROT. One must be procured.

SCARAMEL. I hope, master, you are not doing this deliberately.

PIERROT. Give me my guitar.

SCARAMEL. Your guitar?

PIERROT. I bought it. Scaramel, I feel very happy to-night.

SCARAMEL. Anticipation is always delightful.

PIERROT. And she shall be happy too.

SCARAMEL. She shall fulfil her little destiny.

PIERROT. I think she is different from any other.

SCARAMEL. You always think that, master.

PIERROT. [*offended.*] I am sure she is quite different from every other.

SCARAMEL. O master, promise me you will be selfish.

PIERROT. Scaramel, have you ever known me forget myself?

SCARAMEL. Master, you are almost all I could wish.

PIERROT. Now for my serenade. Am I in voice to-night?

SCARAMEL. The best that money could buy.

PIERROT. Tenor or baritone?

SCARAMEL. Both.

PIERROT. To-night I will sing tenor.

SCARAMEL. Three times for a tenor, twice for a baritone.

SCARAMEL *claps three times.*

Enter a TENOR.

PIERROT. Is this it?

SCARAMEL. This is it.

PIERROT. Can it speak as well?

SCARAMEL. I never inquired.

PIERROT. [*to* TENOR.] Please remember, sir, that I pride myself on my voice.

TENOR. Your voice?

PIERROT. Oh, you can speak?

TENOR. Your voice!

PIERROT. Well, I've paid for it. Now, Scaramel, leave me to sing.

Exit SCARAMEL.

TENOR. [*sings.*]

How now, everywhere up in air stars stare:
On the roof shines the moon.
Little bird in your nest, are you there?

Up, song, to her chamber go : say low, " Down below,
Thy love begs a boon."
Little bird in your nest, are you there ?

PIERROT. How strange my voice sounds to-night.

TENOR. [*sings.*]

Sleep, sleep, for Love's sake let her wake,
Say, " Take no rest ! "
Little bird in your nest, are you there ?
Tame heart, take heat, go beat in the small sweet breast.
Little dove, bird of Love, are you there ?
Hour of night, at her bower go beat : say, " Sweet, now rise ! "
Time flies ! O Love, are you there ?
Undo and renew to the night the light of your bright blue eyes !
For the man in the moon is here.
Do you hear ? He is here !

PIERROT. Now stand back ! [*He takes the* TENOR'S *place.*] Well ? Well ? Well ? ? ? Hasn't she heard ? Won't she answer ? I sang that as finely as ever I sang it. Come here, Tenor. Ah, I understand. This means nothing to you—you don't care a jot. You sing what you're paid to sing, not a note more. You professionals will be the ruin of art. Don't answer me, sir. Off with you !

Exit TENOR ; *exit* PIERROT.

Enter SCARAMEL, *followed by* MOUTH *and* HAWK *bringing gardener's* BOY *captive.*

SCARAMEL. Bring him along, bring him along !

BOY. Here, I say ! You are pinching of me !

SCARAMEL. Are you pinching him, Hawk ?

HAWK. No, but I will.

BOY. I'll yell.

SCARAMEL. Don't let him yell.

MOUTH. [*putting his hand over* BOY'S *mouth.*] Now then.

HAWK *pinches him ; an inarticulate sound.*

BOY. I did yell—inside myself ; oh, and it hurts !

SCARAMEL. That's all right.

BOY. Ho, lor ! Why, you be the mummers. I thought you was thieves.

SCARAMEL. Impudent bumpkin ! Pinch him again !

BOY. Naow ! Steady on, steady on. Why, I was lookin' for you when you found me. Ha, ha !

ALL. Ba-a-a-a.

BOY. I want to run away with you and be a mummer.

ALL. Oh !

CALLOW. That will be nice.

BOY. I'm glad you're glad. What's your name ?

CALLOW. Christopherothchilyoctopusomegatommy-rotempusemulsio Smith.

BOY. It's a nice little name. I'll get you to write it down.

MOUTH. What shall we do with him ?

SCARAMEL. What can you do, clodhopper ?

KENNEL. Can you sing ? Can you dance ?

SCARAMEL. Can you find us a ladder ?

BOY. What for ?

SCARAMEL. Don't ask silly questions.

HAWK. Why, for fun.

BOY. There's one by the shed.

SCARAMEL. Fetch it.

BOY. To the right, round the corner.

SCARAMEL. Quietly.

Exeunt three of the MUMMERS.

SCARAMEL. And so, my innocent young friend, you want to see the world ?

BOY. Ah, what I says is, give me Life.

SCARAMEL. Have you money ?

BOY. No ; I'll earn it by playing the fool.

SCARAMEL. Quite likely.

BOY. Just as you do.

SCARAMEL. Now you can't come alone.

BOY. Can't I?

SCARAMEL. Not with us; you must bring a maid with you.

BOY. Oh, I can wait on myself.

SCARAMEL. Come, is there no pretty maid in the house—one that you'd like to see Life with for a bit?

BOY. Oh, now I take you.

SCARAMEL. Whose window is that?

BOY. Oh, that's Aunt Prude's. I won't have her. She snores. Quiet now, and you'll hear her.

SCARAMEL. The next?

BOY. That's a passage.

SCARAMEL. Well, the one beyond.

BOY. Never you mind. I'll have her if she'll come. We must wait till to-morrow to ask.

SCARAMEL. That's Miss Prunella's.

BOY. You are quick.

SCARAMEL. Thank you, that's what I wanted to know.

HAWK. What now?

SCARAMEL. Oh, tie him up somewhere safe and quiet.

SCARAMEL *goes to fetch* PIERROT. *The ladder is brought on.*

BOY. Tie me up somewhere?

HAWK. No nonsense! you're one of us now. Dare-devil's your name.

BOY. No, it isn't.

HAWK. And now's your time to carry her off.

BOY. What! Wake her up at this time o' night?

MOUTH. There's the ladder against her window.

KENNEL. Now serenade her.

BOY. Sera—

KENNEL. Sing to her.

BOY. My! That'd wake her.

CALLOW. Then up you go.

MOUTH. And in at the window.

BOY. Oh, I'm feared she'd think I was intruding.

HAWK. Bah! you're afraid.

BOY. No, I ain't. But is it good manners? I've been brought up well.

MOUTH. First you must sing. Here's my mandolin.

BOY. What must I sing?

CALLOW. That your heart is fluttering like a little dicky-bird.

BOY. I don't think I know that one.

MOUTH. What do you know?

BOY. Well, will this do? "O you naughty, naughty birds, now will you—"

PIERROT *comes in, followed by* SCARAMEL.

PIERROT. What's this?

BOY. Now, you put me off.

SCARAMEL. Put him safe somewhere, didn't I tell you?

HAWK. Come now, you shall finish it later.

BOY. "Come into my garden, and I'll"—what are you doing?

KENNEL. Truss him tight.

BOY. This ain't part of the game.

MOUTH. Yes, it is.

BOY. This ain't seeing Life.

CALLOW. Oh, yes, it is.

BOY. Now you let me go, or I'll holler.

HAWK. Oh, no you won't.

Gags him.

SCARAMEL. Now listen to me, my rustic friend. You're a clod, and must stay a clod. Don't be flying, or you'll come to grief. Can you hear me? That's right. Think it over till morning under the hedge. Now roll him away.

They roll him up to the hedge.

HAWK. Roly-poly gardener's boy.

MOUTH. Safe like a hedgehog.

CALLOW. Good night.

MOUTH. Sleep well.

SCARAMEL. [*to* PIERROT.] Yes, master, that's her window.

PIERROT. Ah, my bird,
Be not too tame!

SCARAMEL. Master, we wait your word.

PIERROT. Come, comrades, then, stand back into the shade!
Round us, night opens her sweet ears afraid,
Dusk in her eyes. Now call! and like a snare
Send invitation up through the soft air,
To that well-feathered nest that lacks its pair!

ALL. [*sing.*]
Sleeper, awake, arise, look out!

HAWK. The night owl calls and bats are about.

ALL. And we call, too. Come down, Pierrette!

ROMP. Here in our midst there's sport and to spare.

COQUETTE. Here with us there's a heart to share.

TAWDRY. Lie-a-bed, lie-a-bed, why d'you stay there?

ALL. What means waiting? Come down, Pierrette!

KENNEL. Here over morals the moon throws a shade.

MOUTH. Here with us there's a game to be played.

HAWK. Here where the merry-thought waits for the maid.

ALL. Why are you waiting? Come down, Pierrette!

CALLOW. Come and find comfort, come down, down, down!

DOLL. So we are to have another queen again? Will you serve her?

COQUETTE. Perhaps—as she deserves.

TAWDRY. I'll not.

ROMP. Ah, you're jealous.

TAWDRY. I? What for! A mere penny-toy like her?

PIERROT. The curtain stirred !

SCARAMEL. Back there into the shade !

They all shrink back into the shade. PIERROT *remains alone.* PRUNELLA *opens her window.*

PRUNELLA. Who is there ? Who are you ?

PIERROT. The man in the moon.

PRUNELLA. Oh ! Why have you come back ?

PIERROT. You called me ! I came soon.

PRUNELLA. I ?

PIERROT. You called me in a dream ; and in a dream I came.

PRUNELLA. No—for I have not slept.

PIERROT. You are asleep now. Will you not come down ?

PRUNELLA. Asleep ?

PIERROT. Will you come down ?

PRUNELLA. How can I come ?

PIERROT. See ! Out here waiting for you is a ladder of dreams. Come down, and the dream will come true ! [*Pauses. She makes no sign.*]
Shall I come up and be your dream ? Speak, give me a sign ! [*She shakes her head.*]
Then come down, and be mine !

PRUNELLA. Ah, but I dare not ! Oh, what would they say if they knew ?

PIERROT. They would say nothing. They won't mind, they are asleep too.
People when sleeping come out of their shells and find wings :
Dreaming, they wake to a world full of beautiful things.
They become wise, they open their eyes and can see ;
They become happy and young, they become free !

PRUNELLA. Pierrot, is it you, is it you that is saying all that ; or is the world talking to me in its sleep ?

PIERROT. It is the world, Pierrette, and Love !

PRUNELLA. Just now I heard voices calling me from below and now I seem to hear them again.

PIERROT. Tell me what they say?

PRUNELLA. All the things I have ever said to myself and wished to be true. The trees say, "Come and hide in us!" The grass says, "Come and walk on me!" The dewdrops say, "Come and dance with us!" And the air is like milk and honey to my lips as I lean out and breathe.

PIERROT. And the moon says, "I am full of love, and my beams bring happiness!"

PRUNELLA. [*sighs.*] Ah!

PIERROT. Pierrette, it is already time for us to say good-bye.

PRUNELLA. Where are you going now?

PIERROT. To my playground, the world: where the gardens have no hedges and the roses no thorns, and where all birds fly free. Pierrette, Pierrette, come out of your cage! Come down!

PRUNELLA. I—I must! For a moment—for a moment only!

PIERROT. Life's but a moment.

PIERROT *makes a signal to* SCARAMEL, *who gives him* DOLL'S *cloak. He runs with it up the ladder and receives* PRUNELLA *in his arms.*

DOLL. P'ff, I'm cold! It was I said I'd be nice to her, and now they take my cloak.

CALLOW. [*embracing her.*] Let me warm it again!

DOLL. I don't want you.

CALLOW. None of me? Oh, feel my heart!

ROMP. Oh, look, he's bringing her down!

ALL. Pierrette, Pierrette!

PIERROT *and* PRUNELLA *advance; he holds up his hands for silence. They all stop and become solemn.* PRUNELLA *stands very still.*

PIERROT. Now you are come, tell me what's in your mind.

PRUNELLA. The love I fear to lose, the love I find :
Those who might miss me—those whom I might miss.

PIERROT. Forget, let the rest go ! Remember this !
Kisses her on the lips.

PRUNELLA. Ah !

PIERROT. Flower of night, flower of night !
Come and stand within the light,
And look into the heavens above,
Where the moon hangs like a hive,
And the stars are all alive ;
For the stars are the bees of love.

Flower of night, flower of night !
My love and my delight !
Oh, come, and we will be there soon !
Where the night waits warm,
And the bees all in a swarm
Are hanging honey up to the moon !

Flower of light, dear delight,
Let our bed be there to-night !
Oh, come, and we will sleep there soon !
And there we will dwell,
Two hearts in one cell,
And eat up all the honey in the moon.

While the song goes on, the rest have crept away, finger on lip, leaving the lovers alone. Now they creep from behind the hedges, repeating the last line. A murmur of " Queen-bee, Queen-bee ! " rises.

PIERROT. Why do you stand so still ?

PRUNELLA. It is too far
For me to go.

PIERROT. Why, what a child you are !
Do far things frighten you ?

PRUNELLA. Where should I be
In the great empty world ?

PIERROT. You'd be with me.

PRUNELLA. Always?

PIERROT. Yes, practically always. Come!

PRUNELLA. No, loose my hands, let be! I must go home.

PIERROT. Thy home is Love. Sweetheart, speak truth and tell:
At this cold fountain learn Love's oracle!

He leads her to the fountain: all the MUMMERS *wrap themselves in cloaks and follow in procession; they stand looking on, while* PIERROT *and* PRUNELLA *advance towards the statue.*

PIERROT. Here turned to stone
The God of Flame
Stands all alone,
And mocks his name.
Bereft of breath
He stands and looks like death.

Mute on his viol
Lies his bow;
As on a dial
Here shadows show,—
O heavy crime!—
The waste, the waste of time!

PRUNELLA. [*kneeling.*]
O stony youth,
Mute lips, blind eyes,
Reveal the truth!
Awake, arise!
Tell me, oh, tell,
If Love indeed be well!

Pause. LOVE *wakes. He draws his bow across his viol and speaks.*

LOVE. Yea, hearken to the lips of Love!
Where he abideth all is well,

His eyes do move the stars above,
He holds the Heavens beneath his spell;
And in thy heart thou hear'st the chime
Of Love whose feet shall outrun time.

The MUMMERS *make a circle about the lovers, and move slowly round them in solemn procession.*

PRUNELLA. I hear the sound, I must obey!
Ah, where am I since yesterday?

PIERROT. Years, and a hundred leagues away!

PRUNELLA. There I find thee, O swiftest foot on earth!

PIERROT. So runs my wish: [*To himself.*]—which yesterday had birth.

PRUNELLA. [*turning to look back at her window.*]
Yet see, look there: how desolate it seems!
Let me go back and gather up my dreams,
Where I have slept so well!

PIERROT. You must forget
Your former dreams, now you are Pierrette.

PRUNELLA. Why force me thus to go?

PIERROT. Nay, you are free.

PRUNELLA. Let me stay here!

PIERROT. Then do not come with me.

[*Pause.*]

See yonder star, and yonder see!
And, up above, the milky way!
But yonder is the star for thee,
Where we shall be ere dawn of day,—
Up hill, down dale, and far away.

PRUNELLA. One hangs on yonder cypress spray:
Nay, look how pale and wan for proof
He hangs, imploring me to stay!
And one goes down behind the roof.
Where shall I be ere dawn of day?

PIERROT. Years, and a hundred leagues away!

A dance begins round the two lovers. At intervals LOVE *strikes a note on his viol which gives the beat to*

the other music. The Columbines take off PRUNELLA'S *cloak and reveal her as a* PIERRETTE. *They pelt her with white blossoms, till she seems a cloud of flowers. At the end of the dance* PIERROT *advances and crowns her with a wreath of flowers.*

PIERROT. What you have dreamed to-night, do not forget.
Farewell, Prunella!

PRUNELLA. I am—Pierrette!

LOVE *strikes a note on his viol.* PRUNELLA *throws up her arms in a gesture of surrender, and flies into* PIERROT'S *arms. He lifts her bodily and carries her away. There is a burst of laughter from the* MUMMERS: *they pelt the statue with flowers, and romp off. After a minute enter the two* GARDENERS *with heavy staves and a lantern. The cuckoo clock in the house strikes three. They search round timorously and scratch their heads. One of them sees the open window and ladder, and mounts to look into the empty chamber. The gardener's* BOY *rolls out from under the hedge, frightening the other* GARDENER *terribly.* LOVE *draws his bow and strikes a triumphant note. The* GARDENER *dashes towards him and strikes him with his staff. The bow falls broken from* LOVE'S *hand.*

ACT III

Three years have elapsed. Sunset. The garden is overgrown, weedy, and neglected. The fountain is moss-grown and thick with creepers. The house-shutters are closed, all but one or two; a notice "To Let" stands near.

The BOY *is discovered dragging gardening tools across the stage in a listless and desultory fashion, piling them on a bench, or packing them into an open hand-barrow.*

BOY. [*sings dolefully.*]

My father said, my father said:
What did my father say?
"So long as you stands on yer 'ead
You're sure to find yer way!"

'Ullo! there's that bird again. Waits till he sees me pack my clappers and then he begins of 'imself. Sh! Sh! You just get out till I'm gone! Take that, and say I told yer!

Throws stone, and then begins to wheel away hand-barrow.

Three years ago he told me so:
But when my thoughts do run,
Then all the work I 'ad to do
I 'as to leave undone.

QUAINT. [*entering from house.*] Boy! here, boy! leave the spade.

BOY. Boy yerself! Who are you talking to?

QUAINT. Why don't you come when you are called?

BOY. If you requires to attract my notice, you better say "Mister Gardener"; else I mayn't 'ear yer.

QUAINT. Pooh!

BOY. When you come into my garden, you acts according. I don't come and poke my 'ead into the 'ouse and say, "Gal! old gal!" do I? Gardener's what I am now —same as I'm always telling yer.

QUAINT. Fine Gardener indeed!

BOY. 'Ead gardener.

QUAINT. Well, I doubt if the new owner'll take you on, when he sees the state the garden is in now. Have you taken all the tools down to the cottage?

BOY. If you'd eyes in yer 'ead you'd see. 'T's what I'm doing now.

QUAINT. Mistress informed me to tell you that she wants all the flowers from Miss Prunella's garden taken. You'd better come back for them afterwards: leave the spade!

BOY. Leave the garden! There's missis's bell a-hollering for yer! You go, or you'll catch it.

QUAINT. Pho!

Exit into house.

BOY. [*trails across to bench, leaves broom, and takes spade with him, crossing in front of statue.*] What are you looking at me for?—ain't said nothing to you. [*Retires up with hand-barrow. Enter* PRIVACY *followed by* QUAINT: *she descends slowly and enters the garden.* QUAINT *locks the door and signals contemptuously to* BOY *to go.* PRIVACY *sighs,* QUAINT *echoes her with exaggerated sentiment to convey sympathy and attract approval. Exit* BOY *slowly, imitating* QUAINT'S *sigh as he goes.*]

QUAINT. Hem!

PRIVACY. Have you the keys? Is everything locked now?

QUAINT. Everything that would lock, ma'am! Some of the keys won't work.

PRIVACY. Oh, it doesn't matter. There's nothing here that any one would want to take.

QUAINT. Are we to wait and give the keys to the gentleman?

PRIVACY. Yes, he will be here presently.

QUAINT. Well, I do wonder, if he's such a rich gentleman as they say he is, however he can care to come and live in such a place—as it is now.

PRIVACY. He does not intend to live here.

QUAINT. Oh, if he only means to die here, the place'll suit him well enough! [*Softening.*] I beg your pardon, ma'am, I didn't mean anything. It wasn't that I was thinking about—though what's a black dress for, if it isn't to make you hang your head like a tear-drop? No, ma'am, it's only this lonesomeness gets so on one's nerves. I wonder you could bring yourself to stay as long as you have.

PRIVACY. I had recollections to keep me here.

QUAINT. Ah, my poor mistresses! They wouldn't have wished to see you here, with the place like this—all so shamefaced as it looks now!

PRIVACY. I had other reasons, Quaint.

QUAINT. I daresay you had, ma'am. Most people have reasons for doing foolish things.

PRIVACY. I thought that some day Prunella might come back, and I could not bear the thought of her finding nobody here—or only strangers.

QUAINT. Oh, don't trouble yourself, ma'am! She won't come back. She has forgotten you. She doesn't care!—going off like that with a lot of giddy-gaddies.

PRIVACY. Perhaps it was we who drove her away.

QUAINT. I don't think she took much driving.

PRIVACY. We old maids forget what youth is like. Perhaps—without meaning to—we made life too hard for her.

QUAINT. Ah, well, she has got the making of that in her own hands now, and they're about full, I'll be bound. Psh! You were always softer than the others. I never

heard them say a word. I'd like to have seen her daring to put her nose in here while they were alive!

PRIVACY. Hush!

A bell rings. PRIVACY *looks agitated.*

QUAINT. Good lud! ma'am, why do you start like that? Now you're all of a tremble.

PRIVACY. I always think and hope—

QUAINT. The gate always stands open, ma'am. She'd never ring the bell.

PRIVACY. No, she'd never ring the bell. The gate stands open always, and at night a lamp has burnt.

QUAINT. Shall I go, ma'am?

PRIVACY. Of course. This must be he.

QUAINT *goes.*

How poor the place is; weeds are everywhere.
Dead leaves beneath one's feet, rustling like memories:
Poor, restless ghosts of unforgotten time.

Enter PIERROT *and* SCARAMEL, *shown in by* QUAINT.

PRIVACY. Sir, you are very punctual.

PIERROT. Am I punctual, Scaramel?

SCARAMEL. Master, we have accomplished twenty-one miles in fifty-five minutes.

PIERROT. That seems slow. So this is the place I remember.

PRIVACY. You have been here before?

PIERROT. Once upon a time. A charming dull spot. But changed, but changed.

PRIVACY. You don't find what you expected?

PIERROT. Scaramel, did I expect anything?

SCARAMEL. My master now makes it his rule never to expect anything. So he is never disappointed.

PIERROT. You wonder, madam, what my interest in buying such a place can be. I once picked up here, by chance, a treasure, a trinket, which I have since lost.

PRIVACY. [*with sudden intuition.*] Prunella?

PIERROT. I beg your pardon.

PRIVACY. Prunella, Prunella, Prunella!

PIERROT. I had forgotten her name.

SCARAMEL. We called her by some other.

PRIVACY. It was you, it was you!

PIERROT. Yes, it was I.

PRIVACY. Where is she now?

PIERROT. I often wonder.

PRIVACY. Oh, we forgave her going; almost we would have forgiven you the theft. But you are heartless.

PIERROT. That is true. How did you find it out? No matter. Every one finds me out now.

PRIVACY. But tell me all you know.

PIERROT. Tell her, Scaramel.

SCARAMEL. Madam, the story is not interesting unless my telling make it so; and there is much that you may not understand. I think we may claim that we educated her. Her education, madam, was very deficient; she had been much neglected. Life was a dead letter to her. We taught her everything. She learned to dance, to laugh, to sing, to love. For a time it seemed that there was nothing she could not learn. She loved my master very faithfully, and my master accepted the situation like a man. He has a tender heart, he likes to see happy faces around him, and so he took a step which—not through his own fault—led to a little misunderstanding.

PIERROT. Scaramel, I am disposed to tell this myself. But stay near me: I may need prompting. What was that original remark I made about women the other day, Scaramel?

SCARAMEL. Master, you said they puzzled you.

PIERROT. Ah! It is still true. They are so illogical. Think, madam, she said she loved me and yet she left me! Well, you shall hear. For two years—it was two years, was it not, Scaramel?—for two happy years we had wandered together from place to place, seeing the world—foreign countries, and people, and gay towns. We danced,

we laughed, we sang. We were married—she had wished it. [*He shrugs.*] People laughed when I told them that. "Pierrot married!" they said, "Oh no!—unless he has married a dozen." But we were married—that was what made things difficult. I wasn't used to being married—it's outside my habits altogether: it was strange, and everybody laughed so. And one day it seemed so foolish that I—went away and left her.

PRIVACY. You said that she left you.

PIERROT. Ah, not then, not then! That was later. I left her—saying nothing: it is so much easier to say nothing when you've nothing to say. But before I went I had given her a lot of money, and a lot of pretty things, dresses, trinkets, bon-bons—everything I could think of to make her happy—except—my love. [*He begins to be carried away by his story, and to lose his pose of indifference.*] I took that with me. And presently I found I couldn't get rid of it; and it grew heavier and heavier, till my heart began to—what did my heart begin to do, Scaramel?

SCARAMEL. Your heart became bad company, master.

PIERROT. Yes, it was quite distressing! I couldn't amuse myself: I couldn't dance, or laugh, or sing. It always came and caught me by the throat, and said, or seemed to say, "You thief! you fool!" I tried cures; but they were no good. And so, and so—at last I went back to see if the cure was there.

PRIVACY. Yes?

PIERROT. I had been gone a whole year; but I came back again. You see, now—it was not I who left her; she didn't wait for me long enough. There was the little house, just as I had left it: she hadn't taken a penny, she hadn't touched a thing. Even the last thing I gave her before I went I found lying covered over with dust inside the empty house which I opened with my own key. And in the garden was a small stone, and on it was written: Here lies—"Pierrette".

PRIVACY. Who was " Pierrette " ?

PIERROT. You may explain that, Scaramel.

SCARAMEL. Pierrette was the name of my master's love for her. She probably goes by some other name now, if she is still alive. To us, of course, she chose to die. What may have happened since—

PRIVACY. You neither know nor care.

SCARAMEL. It was an episode.

PRIVACY. I thank you for the story, sir.

SCARAMEL. Not at all. My master rather likes to relate it. I notice it grows late. We expect guests. They are almost due.

PRIVACY. I will leave you in full possession. My maid will hand you the keys.

QUAINT *talks to* SCARAMEL.

PIERROT. Madam, this seems almost like turning you out.

PRIVACY. My means no longer permit me to live where I would wish.

PIERROT. That is a pity!—not to be able to do as one wishes. And you have grown to be a part of the place: its atmosphere clings round you. Do you mean to go—quite away ?

PRIVACY. To a cottage beyond the gates. I dare not go as far as I would wish. She might return.

PIERROT. She — might — return. Scaramel! Have you any— ? [SCARAMEL *gives him his purse.*] I fear you are poor ?

PRIVACY. My poverty is not of your making, and my sorrow money will not buy from me. I will intrude no longer.

Exit PRIVACY.

PIERROT. Really, Scaramel, have you no repartee ?

SCARAMEL. Master, I was not listening.

PIERROT. Then that was as well. Give me the key of the house.

SCARAMEL. [*to* QUAINT.] Give me the key of the house.

QUAINT. There are the keys.

SCARAMEL. Which is it?

PIERROT. Quickly, quickly.

SCARAMEL. Is it a large key?

QUAINT. No, it's a small key. [*He finds a key.*] That is the key of the garden gate.

PIERROT and SCARAMEL. [*guiltily startled.*] Eh?

QUAINT. That's the house key.

PIERROT *takes it.*

PIERROT. It's not a watch key, nor a bed key, not a watch key, nor a bed key.

Goes into house.

SCARAMEL. Dear me, now!

QUAINT. Your master's mad, I don't mind telling you.

SCARAMEL. Original, my good woman: at the most, eccentric. It suits him.

QUAINT. And he's a villain.

SCARAMEL. My good woman, if you were a little more up in the world—

QUAINT. And if you were a little more up in the world—upon a ten-foot gallows, you and your master too—the world'd be sweeter. He's a rogue.

SCARAMEL. If you were more up in the ways of the world, you'd know that it's usual for us to abuse our own masters, not each other's.

QUAINT. Well, my mistress is a fool, but he's a scoundrel. What's he come back here for?

SCARAMEL. Would you understand if I said "to lay a ghost"?

QUAINT. No, I shouldn't.

SCARAMEL. Then I won't tell you.

QUAINT. Ghost indeed! He's little better himself! A whited sepulchre's what he is. Silkworms'll eat him!

I can see his angling skeleton grinning out of him already. Yours too. Yours is a black one. Whalebone.

SCARAMEL. My good woman, you have no dignity. Masters aren't worth quarrelling about. They mean wages, nothing more. There are good places and bad places. Now, I'm busy : you'd better go !

QUAINT. Well, you'll find your place some day. [*Points down.*]

Exit QUAINT.

SCARAMEL. [*smiling.*] Now, that's a woman's way of saying it, and neat too. Well, I must buck ; there's a lot to be done !

Enter KENNEL.

CALLOW. [*outside.*] O you little moulting birds, now will you
Come into my garden, and I'll kill you !

Enter CALLOW.

KENNEL. What ho, Scaramel ! Hark to this belated youth !

SCARAMEL. That's just what he is, a belated youth. Where are the rest ?

KENNEL. How should I know ? Lost their way, most likely.

SCARAMEL. Well, you've found yours. You are in luck.

Re-enter BOY, *with spade on shoulder.*

BOY. Why, it's the mummers !

CALLOW. Who's that ? What has he got in his hand ?

KENNEL. A spade !

CALLOW. Who are you ?

BOY. Me ? 'Im as you tied up and put under the 'edge that night. Saucy 'ounds you was, too !

SCARAMEL. And what are you here for now ?

BOY. 'Ere for now ? Why, I'll tell yer—what I 'as to tell everybody—I'm 'ead gardener here now ; and I'm diggin' 'oles to bury you in—'ead downwards — make

yer 'air grow, same as mine — so you won't know yerselves.

Departing with dignity.

CALLOW and KENNEL. [*laughing foolishly.*] Hee-hee! Hee-hee! Won't know ourselves, eh?

They stop abruptly.

BOY. [*returning.*] Say, I'm glad I didn't come with you when you ast me. Why, you are only a lot of scarecrows after all! Good night, bawly 'eads; sleep well, and don't let the ghosts wake yer before it's time.

Exit.

CALLOW. Ghosts? I don't like that fellow.

KENNEL. No; and he doesn't like us.

CALLOW. Once he wanted to come with us.

KENNEL. Times have changed. Come, scarecrow!

CALLOW. What, you little jays and jackdaws, will you Come into my garden, and I'll kill you!

PIERROT *comes out of the house, and passes without observing them; they enter it.*

SCARAMEL. Have you any further orders, master?

PIERROT. [*abstractedly.*] Oh, go to Scaramel, ask him!

SCARAMEL *starts.*

PIERROT *goes towards fountain.*

Scaramel, who was that spoke to me just then?

SCARAMEL. Master, the air of this place is not good for you. Would it not be better if—

PIERROT. If you changed it? Yes, change it, Scaramel, change it by all means, if you can. Clear it of its vapours, tell the sun to rise, and the birds to sing!

Enter HAWK *and* MOUTH *with* TAWDRY.

TAWDRY. Lud, it's a weary way here.

MOUTH. I don't think much of the place, now we've got here.

HAWK. Why, then it's as well I can't see it.

SCARAMEL. Come, you'll feel better by supper-time.

MOUTH. No, my appetite's gone.

SCARAMEL. But you're still greedy.

MOUTH. I'm losing my teeth.

TAWDRY. Times have changed.

HAWK. Times have changed.

MOUTH. Times have changed.

They go into the house.

SCARAMEL. Master!

PIERROT. Alone at the end of the day,
As the sick world grins by,
Stands this house—

SCARAMEL. Master!

PIERROT. Eh?

SCARAMEL. The company arrives.

PIERROT. My friends?

SCARAMEL. Your guests.

PIERROT. Not the same thing, is it, Scaramel?

SCARAMEL. You will remember, sir, we are out of friends for the moment.

DOLL *runs on.*

DOLL. Oh, I'm lost, I'm lost in this ugly garden. They've left me all alone.

PIERROT. Are you afraid?

DOLL. Yes, very.

PIERROT. What sort of company d'you want?

DOLL. I'm not particular.

PIERROT. No, truly. There's the house, get inside.

DOLL. Won't you come?

PIERROT. Not yet.

DOLL *goes in.*

PIERROT. Who's that old woman?

SCARAMEL. Master, that's Doll with the painted smile and her little turned-in toes. You remember her?

PIERROT. She has grown old.

SCARAMEL. Then there's Hawk, and Callow, and Kennel, and Mouth.

PIERROT. Faithful followers of my purse.

SCARAMEL. Master, they must live.

PIERROT. They call it living.

SCARAMEL. Then there's Coquette.

PIERROT. Ah, she's been precious in her time.

SCARAMEL. H'm! her modesty's down at ankle now, like a slipt garter. Romp's a little heavier on the bounce than she used to be. Tawdry's much as usual, but dressed worse than ever, and costing more. The old faces, master, as you desired?

PIERROT. Well, if they'll help me to remember, or to forget. Either way, either way.

SCARAMEL. H'm!

He goes into the house; laughter is heard.

PIERROT. [*sits listless by fountain, and gazes all round and up at house.*] How now—

Fingers his guitar doubtfully.

How now, everywhere, up in the air, stars stare!
Little bird in your nest, are you there?

Lets his guitar fall dejectedly.

No answer!

After a pause he takes up his guitar again.

Sleep, sleep, for God's sake let her wake! say, "Take no rest"—

He breaks off.

I forget, I forget the words that once came of themselves.

Re-enter SCARAMEL, *with his fiddle.*

[*Angrily.*] Scaramel, there's no tune in these strings. They are rusty.

SCARAMEL. Master, everything's rusty here, it seems to me. Nothing goes right, everything wants oiling. I shall have more on my hands than I can do.

PIERROT. Get the others to help you.

SCARAMEL. They are no good. One can't rouse them. I think they want a new master.

PIERROT. Oh yes, find them one by all means. What's the matter?

SCARAMEL. Kennel's guttering to his end. Callow's brain is softening—what's left of it. Mouth has become a jibberer; you can hear him now! Hawk's as blind as a bat. Not one of them's what he used to be. We are growing old, master.

PIERROT. Do you remember, Scaramel, that night?

SCARAMEL. Master, I remember many nights. At what hour shall dancing begin?

PIERROT. Ah, how tender she was! How fresh and young!

SCARAMEL. Master, at what hour?

PIERROT. Oh, when you like, when you like! She stood by me here at this fountain. Do you remember, Scaramel?

SCARAMEL. I will remember anything you wish, master, as soon as we have made all the arrangements.

PIERROT. Scaramel, I believe this stone remembers more than you. You are very selfish, Scaramel. Life to you is a meal; and there you sit at it, with a napkin tucked up from your waist to your chin, and you shut your eyes and open your mouth and eat. And when you get up from it, all your mind will be like a bill of fare; just a list of the things you have eaten.

SCARAMEL. Possibly, master. The wines to-night are—

PIERROT. Ah! [*Turns away in disgust, and strikes his hand on the fountain.*]

O Love, your fountain has run dry,
And have you lost your tongue?
Speak, stone!—

You see, Scaramel, he won't answer me now.

SCARAMEL. Love never does answer, master, if you treat it too seriously.

PIERROT. That night this stone thing seemed to have life and speech! The water sang to us, and music seemed

to come, one knew not whence. Scaramel, have you noticed the statue's bow is broken? I wish it repaired. See to it.

SCARAMEL. Instantly, master!

He lays his fiddle-bow in his hand.

PIERROT. Here turned to stone
The God of Flame
Stands all alone,
And mocks his name.
Bereft of breath
He stands and looks like death.

A pause.

That was not the music of it.

SCARAMEL. Master, there will be musicians.

PIERROT. But they're mechanical. Hark to that bird, the last in this garden, I think.
Sweet, sweet, sweet, throw it a crumb.

SCARAMEL. Five courses for supper. Three wines. And the dancing.

He begins to count on his fingers.

PIERROT. Ah, there again. Sweet, sweet, sweet! No, bitter sweet, bitter sweet, bitter, bitter, bitter! Yes, that fits best. So you've learned the word too, have you, little bird? Have you been round the world and loved more than you meant to, and come back again, and found yourself all alone? And forgetting—forgetting—No. Scaramel! Scaramel! [*As he remembers.*]

Alone, at the end of the day
While the gay world ran by,
Stood a house with a heart of decay,
Almost ready to die.

And everything there seemed to wait;
For the hedges were thin;
And a notice was up at the gate,
Begging Love to come in.

But Love cannot read—he is blind,
So he came there one day;
And deeming the owner unkind,
He went his own way.

No, no! For the doors were set wide,
And the windows unfast,
And at night, while the householder sighed,
Love entered at last.

A gong is heard.

PIERROT. [*panic-stricken.*] What's that?

SCARAMEL. Supper is served.

PIERROT. [*recovering himself.*] That matters most.

PIERROT *goes in, followed by* SCARAMEL. *Daylight passes into dark. Intermezzo.*

Enter PRUNELLA. *She sinks down, utterly worn out.*

Re-enter SCARAMEL.

SCARAMEL. What are you doing here, beggar-girl?

PRUNELLA. I've come home.

SCARAMEL. Some mistake, I think.

PRUNELLA. Scaramel!

SCARAMEL. That's my name, and no property of yours.

PRUNELLA. Don't you remember me?

SCARAMEL. No.

Enter DOLL *and* COQUETTE.

DOLL. Scaramel! Scaramel!

COQUETTE. Don't stay away.

DOLL. He's so strange to-night.

COQUETTE. You understand him.

Exit SCARAMEL.

PRUNELLA. Coquette! Doll!

COQUETTE and DOLL. Who's this?

PRUNELLA. Don't you remember me?

COQUETTE and DOLL. No.

PRUNELLA. I was Prunella, I am Pierrette.

COQUETTE and DOLL. Say it again.

PRUNELLA. Oh!

Enter TAWDRY *and* ROMP.

TAWDRY. Doll and Coquette!

ROMP. You're to come back.

COQUETTE. No. Come and look here.

DOLL and COQUETTE. She was Prunella, she is Pierrette. We don't remember her, do we?

TAWDRY and DOLL. No.

PRUNELLA. You loved me once, you said you loved me.

TAWDRY and ROMP. Did we?

COQUETTE. When was that?

ROMP. Was it yesterday?

DOLL. Or the day before?

COQUETTE. I only just remember yesterday.

TAWDRY. I can't remember the day before; I never could.

DOLL. Nor I.

ROMP. And as for last week—

COQUETTE. Or last month, or last year.

DOLL. Why, I always forget how old I am.

COQUETTE and DOLL. We're very sorry.

ROMP and TAWDRY. But it can't be helped, can it?

PRUNELLA. But what are you doing here? This is my home.

DOLL and COQUETTE. Is it?

TAWDRY and ROMP. We don't know.

PRUNELLA. This was my home.

COQUETTE. Perhaps it has forgotten you too.

DOLL. You're very ragged.

PRUNELLA. I am poor.

TAWDRY. And pale.

PRUNELLA. I'm weary.

ROMP. And downcast.

PRUNELLA. I'm disappointed.

ALL FOUR. No wonder that we can't remember you.

PRUNELLA. I have come so far, and now, no welcome.

ROMP. Are you hungry, too?

PRUNELLA. I daresay.

ROMP. Well, if I were you I'd get some food from somewhere. You'll feel better then!

SCARAMEL *comes back.*

SCARAMEL. Now, baggages, you're called for.

PRUNELLA. Scaramel, where's your master?

SCARAMEL. In the house.

PRUNELLA. I must see him.

SCARAMEL. Oh, indeed, no! He wouldn't remember you. Besides, he never lets me remind him of unpleasant things while he is at supper.

PRUNELLA. Then where is my home?

COQUETTE. She's come a long way.

ROMP. She's poor.

TAWDRY. She's very tired.

DOLL. And disappointed.

PRUNELLA. Where are those I once lived with—those who loved me?

SCARAMEL. Dead, I daresay.

PRUNELLA. Dead?

COQUETTE. Now she'll cry.

DOLL. Oh, how unpleasant.

TAWDRY. I can't bear seeing people cry.

ROMP. If she means to cry she must be sent away.

SCARAMEL. Baggages, get in!

DOLL. I do detest these scenes.

TAWDRY. So inconsiderate.

COQUETTE. People should keep their self-respect.

ROMP. I gave her very good advice. But then I'm worldly wise.

They go into the house.

SCARAMEL. Now, you'd better be getting along, beggar-girl.

PRUNELLA. Where?

SCARAMEL. That's your business, isn't it? Far be it from me to interfere.

PRUNELLA. I'm weary.

SCARAMEL. You can sit down outside.

PRUNELLA. I'm weary of life.

SCARAMEL. Ah, that's what all you useless people say.

PRUNELLA. Useless?

SCARAMEL. My girl, no doubt you've been pretty in your time. . . Well, good looks as a livelihood don't last. . . Stir about, find some other occupation. . . It's useless maundering there about what's gone!

PRUNELLA. Does nothing last?

SCARAMEL. Nothing I know of.

PRUNELLA. Does love never last?

SCARAMEL. Now don't you know it doesn't?

PRUNELLA. Yes, I know. No, I deny that; for my love has lived,—will live for ever though I die!

SCARAMEL. Yes, but what's the use?

PRUNELLA. —As I pray to die.

SCARAMEL. Ah, dying isn't so easy either.

PRUNELLA. In the spring my life began;
In the summer—happiness!
In the autumn let me die.

SCARAMEL. Yes, it's a depressing time of year, and such an untidy one. Consider this garden. Look here, young woman, here's a way for you to be useful. If you want to earn twopence—well, say threepence—find a broom and sweep up here. It's more than the market value of the work, but no matter. Only be gone by the time we've finished supper, for really you're not fit to be seen. D'ye hear? Oh, well, gratitude is out of fashion. If you want the money, go round for it to the back door.

SCARAMEL *goes.*

PRUNELLA. [*stands dazed for a while and then speaks.*] No one remembers me. [*She looks round for a broom; finding it, she begins to sweep up the*

leaves. Then her eyes fall on the fountain. To the Statue.]

Oh, yes ; you—you must remember me,
For it was you ! It was you !
Why did you speak ?
Had you no pity for a heart so weak
As mine ? Nay, Love, what made you do this wrong ?
You spoke, and all the world became a song,
And all my heart a bird that heard its mate
Calling and crying to it disconsolate,
Bidding me come !
Say you remember me !

A burst of laughter, clapping of hands, and cries of "Bravo" are heard from the house. She turns to the Statue in a frenzy, and falls, beating her hands against the stone.

O stony youth !
Dumb lips, blind eyes,
Tell me the truth,
Awake, arise !
Say, where does folly dwell, if Love be wise ?

She falls half senseless at his feet. LOVE *draws his bow over his viol, and speaks.*

LOVE. Nay, hearken to the lips of Love !
Where Love endureth, all is well.
He lighteneth the stars above,
He holds the heavens beneath his spell.
Even in thy grief abides the sound
Of Love that girds the whole world round.

PRUNELLA. Dark is that world henceforth about me !

LOVE. Yet,
Couldst thou so will it, yet would thy heart forget
Its love ?

A pause : she sobs.

Nay, nay,—so long hast thou been wise—
Forsake not wisdom now !

PRUNELLA. Oh that mine eyes
Could fail as daylight fails, and all my breath
Melt into air and leave me alone with death!
Hast thou no well of waters here, where I
May drown my sorrow?

LOVE. Nay, my bed is dry
For lack of true love's tears.

PRUNELLA. Here at thy brink
My long-stored griefs shall give thee tears to drink!

LOVE. And having wept thy fill, what gift might best
Afford thee comfort?

PRUNELLA. I would be at rest
Where under earth or sea it lies most deep!

LOVE. Here lay thee down! Cover thyself and sleep!
I'll be thy watcher. Here shalt thou forget
Past griefs and present. Good night, Pierrette!

Pause: she goes to the fountain.

PRUNELLA. Good night, Love, and good night, sorrow!

She lies down and covers herself with leaves.

LOVE. Good night, Pierrette! Pierrette, good morrow!

Sleep music. The light fades from LOVE'S *face.*

MUMMERS *rush on, laughing.*

SEVERAL. Here we come,
Look at us;
Rowdy and rackety.

KENNEL. Life's none so bad after supper.

CALLOW. Wine, wine is my only love.

DOLL. And me, and me, and me.

CALLOW. You're a good second.

HAWK. I can see now; oh! most extraordinary things.

MOUTH. Here we come!

TAWDRY. Look at us!

ROMP. Rowdy and rackety!

SCARAMEL. That's right. Be merry! Sing louder! Sing louder! You're paid for it, aren't you?

KENNEL. As my joints unstiffen so I kick, kick, kick.

MOUTH. Jump, little Tawdry, jump so high.

DOLL. What a wretched old garden.

HAWK. Who pulled it to pieces?

PIERROT *enters.*

PIERROT. Ah, right, right, right! This is youth, this is youth!

SCARAMEL. Is this as you wish it?

PIERROT. Is this as it was?

SCARAMEL. Almost.

PIERROT. Ah, true, she is not here.

SCARAMEL. Won't one of these do?

PIERROT. Which?

SCARAMEL. Doll? Coquette?

PIERROT. If she were dead, would not her ghost haunt this garden?

SCARAMEL. Master!

DOLL. Oh, how unpleasant!

COQUETTE. Don't frighten us.

DOLL. Things were becoming so pleasant again.

PIERROT. I wonder, could we raise it?

SCARAMEL. Master, be warned!

MOUTH. Here we are!

TAWDRY. Look at us!

CALLOW. Rowdy and—

PIERROT. Sh! With due preparation. That was her window. See, I remember.

ROMP. Oh, don't you do it!

HAWK. What's all this? I'm going blind again.

MOUTH. No, the night has fallen.

PIERROT. A ladder against the window just as once upon a time.

SCARAMEL. Master, we don't believe in ghosts.

PIERROT. Scaramel, I'm getting tired of your beliefs. Do as you're told. Also there must be moonlight.

SCARAMEL. There's no moon to-night.

PIERROT. Are you sure? Put out the torches.

DOLL. Oh, not the dark, please!

COQUETTE. We're very much afraid.

PIERROT. No moon? Are you sure? Memory and magic surround us. [*The torches are put out.*] We awake. [*Moonlight.*] It seems long since I saw the moon. Now quietly, quietly about your business—go.

The MUMMERS *go off.*

SCARAMEL. Master, let me tell you, this is very foolish.

PIERROT. How good to be foolish again!

SCARAMEL *goes after the others.* PIERROT *is left alone and despondent.*

LOVE. O you naughty, naughty bird, now will you
Come into my garden, and I'll kill you!

PIERROT. [*turns about, startled.*]
Who called? I thought that I heard some one cry
"Pierrot! Pierrot, come out and die!"
Is no one here at all?

He goes towards house.

LOVE. No one.

PIERROT. Who's there?
What is this echo answering me in air?

He turns. LOVE *nods to him.* PIERROT *shrinks back, shivering with fear.*

LOVE. So you have come back?

PIERROT. [*recovering his courage.*] So you are awake again?

LOVE. It wasn't you who woke me!

PIERROT. Now, where is she? Say.

LOVE. What, have you lost her?

PIERROT. Well, I let her go.

LOVE. Wasn't that careless?

PIERROT. Careless, no!

LOVE. Cruel, then ?

PIERROT. Yes, to myself.

LOVE. Oh, self, self, self, still self !

PIERROT. That is my burden ; take it from me !

LOVE. Do you forget that I am stone ? Call her.

PIERROT. I have called—secretly.

LOVE. Not from your heart, only for vanity.

PIERROT. All, all is vanity !

LOVE. So you have found that out. Well, you're still tolerably young. There's hope in youth. Good night, Pierrot.

PIERROT. Where is she ? Answer me, speak, speak, I say !

LOVE. How can I, when I'm stone, you fool ?

PIERROT. You fool.

He sinks down in despair.

The MUMMERS *return with the ladder.*

HAWK. Quietly, quietly,
Here comes the ladder.

KENNEL. Rickety, rackety,
Mildewed and cobwebby.
Half the rungs broken.

MOUTH. Bats' bodies hung on it,
Owls made a roost of it,
Rats' teeth have gnawed it :
There in a corner we found it forgotten.

CALLOW. Quietly, quietly,

HAWK. Up to the window there,
Rear it and leave it.

ROMP. Who means to venture there ?

COQUETTE. Who will go up on it ?

TAWDRY. Who will come down on it ?

DOLL. Nobody—nobody.

PIERROT. Nobody—nobody.

HAWK. Who is to tap at the window now ?

CALLOW. I won't knock at an empty house.

ROMP. Ghosts might hear us and hang out their heads.

MOUTH. In long white night-caps wagging their skulls.

DOLL. Oh, don't! You frighten me!

PIERROT. Hush!

KENNEL. Yes, I hear something.

PIERROT. See!

HAWK, MOUTH, DOLL, ROMP. See, it opens.

COQUETTE. Yes.

MOUTH. No one is there!

KENNEL. But the window is opening.

SCARAMEL. Master, master, it is only the wind.

PIERROT. Well, it's an ill wind that blows no man good.

SCARAMEL. That old ladder won't bear you!

PIERROT. Let it break!

SCARAMEL. Master! are you insured?

PIERROT. Go! to the Devil who sent you! Take your wage!

Exit SCARAMEL.

ALL. Sleeper, undo your door, look out!
The night wind blows, there are ghosts about,—
Ghosts underground and ghosts in air!

PIERROT. Little bird, in your nest, are you there?

ALL. Under the leaves small skeletons hang,—
Skeleton leaves where the birds once sang.
Come down now, and be one of the gang!

PIERROT. Love, Love, are you there? Are you there?

ALL. Ferret her out, however decayed,
Old and decrepit: here once lived a maid:—
Honey her heart was.

PIERROT. Love, are you there?

ALL. Walls are to climb and windows to break.
Sleep all day, but at night lie awake,
Lest under the shadow thieves enter and take!

PIERROT. Sleep, sleep, for God's sake let her wake!

Love, Love, are you there? [*Rushes up ladder.*]
No one is there, I am alone.
Pierrette! Pierrette! Pierrette!

COQUETTE. Come away!

TAWDRY. I daren't look.

DOLL. He frightens me.

PRUNELLA *rises from the fountain.*

ROMP. Oh, look, look, look!

DOLL. Oh, let's get away!

COQUETTE. It is her ghost!

TAWDRY. Look, she is coming up out of the ground. Oh!

SEVERAL. { Oh yes, it is she! It is she!
Don't stay here any longer!
Let's run, let's run! }

Exeunt all except PIERROT *and* PRUNELLA.

PRUNELLA. Pierrot, come down! Pierrot, lift up your head,
Come from your cage; come down! Pierrot, they said
That you did not remember me at all!
And yet out of my sleep I heard you call
My name!
And when you called—I came.

He descends, and stands gazing at her motionless.

PIERROT. [*whispers.*] Pierrette! Pierrette!

PRUNELLA. It is I, Pierrot!

PIERROT. Living or dead, which art thou?

PRUNELLA. Wouldst thou know,
Draw near and see!

A pause. PIERROT *tries to advance, but fails.*

PIERROT. Pierrette, my feet are slow
For very shame: better on knees to go.

He kneels.

Now—if thou livest—for a sign stretch out
Thy hand toward me! Leave me not in doubt;

She remains motionless.

So, is it so? To meet when parted most!
Dead, thou art dead! And there now stands thy ghost.
Alas, sweet ghost! what dost thou here with me,
Robbing the dead of thy dear company?
Go back where peace is; for no peace dwells here.

PRUNELLA. I stay with Love to look on thee, my dear.

PIERROT. Can death such pity to the dead bequeathe?
I have no right of breath where thou dost breathe;
No cause to look on life, except thou see
The light of day which I destroyed for thee.

PRUNELLA. A little weeping, Pierrot, does not blind
The eyes of love.

PIERROT. Ah me, too bitter kind,
Too ghostly gentle in thy speech thou art!
Peace be to thy sweet soul!

PRUNELLA. Peace to thy heart!
Living or dead, I love thee.

PIERROT. Say, then, why
Camest thou here? To tell me I must die?
Is it to-night? [*Eagerly.*]

PRUNELLA. To-night were choice made free,
Wouldst thou give up thy life to come to me?

PIERROT. Yea, I will come. Yea, I will come!

He rises to his feet.

PRUNELLA. Beware!
If you but touch me, all I am, you share
For life, or death! So choose as you would be!

PIERROT. I will do so. Yea, let the worms eat me,
If now in that pure breast corruption eats!
Thou smilest, am I dead?—It beats! It beats!

PRUNELLA. For thee, only for thee. Quick to thy nest,
Thou weary wandering bird, and there take rest!

PIERROT *drops his head on to her breast, and sobs.*

Nay, nay, lift up thy head, look not so ill!
Earth is sweet under us, the stars shine still.
Look how they number them! Look how they glow!

PIERROT. It is for Pierrette—not for Pierrot!

Light begins to increase in the garden, and the singing of birds is heard.

PRUNELLA. Hush! hush! the birds are waking in the night!
They sing of thee and me, and our delight!

PIERROT. 'Tis not the birds: it is the stars that sing;
Nay, not the stars, nor any mortal thing.
Either in earth beneath or heaven above;
The song thou hearest is the song of Love!
Hark! Look!

They turn to the Statue, which is again flooded with light. LOVE'S *head is raised, and he plays upon his viol, while all the garden grows loud with song.*

THE NEW SIN

B. MACDONALD HASTINGS

PLAYS by B. MACDONALD HASTINGS

THE NEW SIN.

(Published by Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd., 1912.)

LOVE—AND WHAT THEN?

First produced by Cyril Maude at the Playhouse, May 1912. (Same publishers, 1912.)

THE TIDE.

First produced, December 1912. (Same publishers, 1913.)

ADVERTISEMENT.

First produced, April 1915. (Published by Samuel French, Ltd.)

With Eden Phillpotts

THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE.

First produced by H. B. Irving, June 1915. (Published by Samuel French, Ltd.)

BED-ROCK.

First produced, October 1916. (Published by the Stage Publishing Bureau.)

THE NEW SIN

was first produced at the Royalty Theatre, London, W. (under the management of Messrs. J. E. Vedrenne and Dennis Eadie), on Tuesday, February 20, 1912, with the following cast :—

HILARY CUTTS	Arthur Wontner.
MAXIMILIAN CUTTS . . .	O. P. Heggie.
JIM BENZIGER	Malcolm Cherry.
D. L. DAVIDS, J.P., L.C.C., M.A.B.	A. G. Poulton.
WILL GRAIN, M.P. . . .	Guy Rathbone.
STUART CAMPBELL . . .	H. Lane-Bayliff.
PEEL	Arthur Bowyer.

The play produced by Mr. Clifford Brooke.

All applications for permission to perform this play, whether for amateur or professional production, must be made to the Author, in care of the Publishers.

THE NEW SIN

ACT I

The scene is a room in Bloomsbury which is decorated with water-colours and black-and-white sketches and posters. It is clear that it is a room used by such as journalists or artists. There is a door in the centre of the back wall which leads to the staircase and street. There are doors in the right and left walls leading to bedrooms. In the centre of the room is a table with chairs above and to left of it. Before the fireplace, which is situated in the left wall, is a big easy-chair. On the opposite side of the stage is a big settee. A writing-desk with chair stands against the right wall and a sideboard against the back wall. The window is left of the centre entrance. A speaking-tube is fixed on the left of this door, and on the right of it is a telephone. The bookcase stands against the left wall between the door and the fireplace.

JIM BENZIGER *enters from R. and goes to speaking-tube by door C. He is a man of about thirty-two years of age, tall, slim, fastidiously dressed. He moves and speaks very quickly. He is wearing a flowered silk dressing-jacket with light grey trousers and slippers.*

JIM. [*at tube.*] That you, Peel? Porridge and cream, toast, the "Daily Mail", a cup of strong coffee, my letters, a needle and thread and the "Times". [*Puts tube to ear and then back to mouth.*] Mr. Cutts isn't up yet.

Comes to table C. and removes decanter and glasses to sideboard. Alarum of clock in HILARY CUTTS' *bedroom goes off, L. Muffled curses from* HILARY *off L.*

JIM. Hil, wake up. The cock has crowed, and Peel advises haddocks.

Sound of boots being thrown at alarum clock off L. The first one misses. The second one finds its mark and the clock clatters to the floor.

Enter PEEL, *C., bearing tray on which are all* MR. BENZIGER'S *orders.* PEEL *is an old man, and his countenance is ascetic. He is really very feeble bodily, but he affects sprightliness in order to escape dismissal. He wears black-rimmed spectacles and is quite bald. Sometimes he looks like a librarian, sometimes like an alchemist, sometimes like a miser, but in his manner he is always at pains to admit that he is merely the flat porter.*

PEEL. [*bringing tray to table, C.*] The boy didn't leave the "Mail" this morning, sir, so I brought you the "Express" instead. It's just as expensive, sir, and so much more chatty, I think. Porridge and cream, toast, coffee [*ticking them off on his fingers*], the "Times", and you'll find the needle and thread stuck in the loaf, sir. There were no letters for you this morning.

JIM. [*who has snatched up the "Times" and extracted the Literary Supplement, pays no attention whatever to* PEEL, *but rushes to door of* HILARY'S *bedroom up L.*] Hil, Hil! The "Times" has reviewed my novel. [*Indistinct swearing from* HILARY'S *room.* JIM *rattles the handle of the door.*] Let me in and I'll read it to you while you're dressing.

HILARY. [*off.*] Go away, or I'll come out and strangle you.

JIM. Oh, all right—but I think you'd like to know that it says it's—

HILARY. Go away!

JIM. Oh, Hil, don't be so selfish. It says it's absorbing—absorbing, eh? And there's a bit about the heroine—

HILARY. Go away!

JIM. Oh, you're a bear!

Goes towards table. As he does so door opens and WILL GRAIN, M.P., *enters.*

JIM. Morning, Will. I say, the "Times" has reviewed my novel. I'll read it to you. Don't go, Peel. You may as well hear it. I'll lend you the book later on. Listen—

"Mr. James Benziger has long been known to the public as the author of a number of successful melodramas, principally performed in the provinces"—

Not my fault. We broke the record for takings at Wigan. "Girl who ought to have told her parents."

"It is a little startling to find his name on the cover of a really absorbing novel entitled 'Nuts in May,' published by Messrs. Grin & Bearit. The story concerns one"—

But of course you don't want the plot.

"The characters are all very pleasant people, and the heroine is just as charming as most girls whose portraits appear on the cover are not. [*A little puzzled.*] But the chief charm of the book lies in its breezy air of optimism, and the author's healthy outlook on life."

Ha, ha! What do you think of that? [*Laughing.*] "Healthy outlook on life!" [*Going to* HILARY'S *door and knocking it.*] Hil, ever noticed my healthy outlook on life?

A boot crashes against the door.

PEEL. Mr. Benziger, if I may interrupt you, the haddock is—er—hardening. Rigor mortis, sir. Returns after the escape of the heat. Not so pleasant to eat, but please yourself, of course, Mr. Benziger.

JIM. You're quite right, Peel. A man with a healthy outlook should eat his haddocks hot and read his "Times" cold. Will, would you like a bit of the tail?

WILL. Naw! Ah'm a vegetarian. [WILL GRAIN *is a North Countryman. He is short and stout and has a splendidly rubicund countenance. His voice booms.*]

JIM. Of course, I forgot. Peel, fetch Mr. Grain a nut.

[*Indicating sideboard.*] When he has finished that, ask him to choose his own liqueur.

WILL. You'll always laugh at me, Jim, but Ah've done well on nuts. Whenever Ah sees a skiffy person, all spike an' tail, Ah says to myself, Ah says, ther' goes t' roast beef of Old England. Folks that eat beef always grow up like skewers.

JIM. [*excitedly.*] But the father and mother that bred you, Will, were not vegetarians. You're a living example of a man unable to escape from the blessings of heredity.

PEEL. [*noting the growing warmth of the conversation and anxious as ever to preserve peace.*] Well, Mr. Benziger, I'm sure I most heartily congratulate you on your success. I was certain the novel would bring you fame and fortune. You're a gentleman, sir, and the blood in you was bound to tell. A man's got to be well bred nowadays to get a novel published at 6s. with a picture cover. Before I came here, and many years ago it is, I was in service with a lord. He wasn't a real lord ; that is to say, he hadn't a seat in the House. But he was the younger brother of a duke and always had vinegar with his hot fish. Well, he wrote a book and had it published. Beautifully bound it was too, but—sir ! Well, there, we all know what a humbug Ruskin was. We all know what a humbug What's-'is-name is now. But it simply sickened me to read what that man recommended as a rule of life. Art may be the end-all and the be-all of our earthly existence, but I couldn't bear reading homilies to that effect from a man who always helped himself to butter with his egg-spoon. But I mustn't interrupt your conversation, gentlemen.

Exit PEEL, *C.*

JIM. There is something about Peel that makes me afraid of him. If he had the gift of expression, I think you would find that he knew something worth saying.

WILL. [*who during* PEEL'S *speech has taken* " *Daily*

News" from his overcoat pocket and is reading it.] Well, Ah doan't know. Folks with the gift of expression are not generally given to thinkin' over much. Ah'm much more comfortable with a man that thinks a lot and says a little than with a dialectician who's slopping over with epigrams. [*Lowering his voice.*] Now, our friend Hilary Cutts here, he's got the gift of expression. Not so much in his talk, for sure, but in his pictures. Ah'm self-educated, but Ah can see the merit of his painting. One day he will be popular, and if he's lucky he'll be notorious. Ah don't think there's much depth in him, but he's ready, quick, nervous, sensuous, and sensitive. You know Ah'm fond of him. We three men have no secrets, so Ah'm going to ask you a straight question, Jim. Isn't he drinking too much?

JIM. Yes. He's hard up, as stony as a man can be. I've lent him all I can afford. There was a devil of a debauch here last night.

WILL. Why is it? He earns a decentish income. Those trashy things he does for the illustrated papers are well paid for, and he does a lot of them.

JIM. Well, I can't explain it, of course. But I do know that whenever he gets a cheque I find the counterfoils of postal orders about the flat.

WILL. Ah—for sure. Then he's posting the best part of his money away. Who to? A woman.

JIM. My dear, stupid old Will. Why do you always associate money with women?

WILL. Ah doan't know. It seems natural.

JIM. Besides, Hil, I know—merely from observation, mind you—doesn't care a straw about women. In fact, they seem to irritate him. He is always uncomfortable in their presence.

WILL. Then it's a book-maker.

JIM. He hardly knows the difference between a colt and a filly.

WILL. Those are just the folk that bet.

JIM. Well, he's not one of them. I should know about it if he gambled. He is keeping something from us that he is ashamed of, and betting is a positively virtuous hobby —as things go nowadays.

WILL. Then he's supporting his parents.

JIM. Who are both dead. I know that much, but Hilary's family history is not a subject that he has ever talked much about.

WILL. Meanwhile, he's drinking himself to death.

JIM. Rubbish. [*rising from table and going down to* WILL.] You're an incorrigible old—well, an incorrigible old Labour Member. Nearly everything you say is an exaggeration. And you make yourself so unhappy by exaggerating, and every one else unhappy too. I suppose you know your business. You were elected to Parliament very largely by the votes of ignorant people. I don't say they're wrong, mind. I simply say they are ignorant. Exaggeration, big talk of any description hypnotises the uneducated. Therefore, you and the fellow-members of your party are necessarily intemperate in your speech. I talk a good deal, I admit—almost every dramatist does—but I could write a letter on a visiting-card, while you would wish a man a Happy Christmas on a double-crown poster. To say Hilary is drinking himself to death because he occasionally gets decently drunk is as bad as to say that a man is eating himself to death because he occasionally sleeps after his luncheon. You're a teetotaller because you prefer it. A glass of whisky would make you sick. Well, do you know that the avoidance of alcohol in your case makes you a disgusting hedonist? You ought to get drunk occasionally—for your sins, just as the hard drinker occasionally gives up alcohol—for his.

WILL. That's silly. Ah tell you Ah had the vice as a very young man, and Ah gave it up.

JIM. It gave you up. A temptation has got a soul. A temptation is a very fastidious ism. You gave way too

easily, too abjectly, and the temptation deserted you as an unworthy opponent. If a very bad boxer challenges again and again for a championship, and is constantly beaten, the time comes when he can't get another match with the champion. He doesn't want to give up trying for the championship, but the champion ignores his impudent claims. You don't drink alcohol because it has given you a sound thrashing, and won't be bothered with you any more.

WILL. Well, of all the damned impudence!

Enter HILARY CUTTS *from L. He is in his trousers and shirt. He wears a belt instead of braces. He is a clean-shaven, heavily-built man of about* 35. *There is a suggestion of dissipation about his eyes.*

HILARY. Got a stud, Jim?

JIM. Yes; you'll find one in—

HILARY. [*interrupting him.*] Hello, Will! I didn't know you were here. How goes the Public Health Bill? [*He speaks very heartily.*]

WILL. Ah, so, so, Hilary.

HILARY. Where did you say that stud was, Jim?

JIM. You'll find it in a small, silver-coloured box, labelled "Odds and Ends", at the left corner of the shelf on my dressing-table, and, for the sake of the Prophets, don't upset everything.

HILARY. Delicate Jim! Delicate Jim! You ought to have been a Civil Service clerk on £200 per annum—with notepaper. Everything in its place except yourself when the Chief's away. [*Walking out R.*] I don't believe there's another man from here to Buckingham Street who keeps a reserve stud on the premises.

Off.

JIM. Well, how does he look for a man who is drinking himself to death?

WILL. [*surlily.*] The dead are often healthier to look at than the living.

JIM. Oh, you give me the miserables. [*Crash from off R., where* HILARY *has upset box off dressing-table.*] What the devil is he up to?

Rushes off R. WILL *laughs.* HILARY *is thrust out of* JIM'S *room by the shoulders.*

HILARY. Well, I'm sure I'm very sorry; but I got the stud, and I would certainly have cleared up the foundry if you had let me. [*Turning to* WILL.] Impudence on its dignity! Well, Will, you know I'm really anxious to hear how this precious Bill of yours is going. It ought to make you famous. Then an Under-Secretaryship will come, then a Cabinet post. Why, we may even see you in the House of Lords.

WILL. Not me, Hil. Ah'm a man of the people, and to the people Ah'm going to stick.

HILARY. Rather a quixotic notion. [*Moving off to his room.*] The tram fare from Battersea is just the same to both Houses.

Exit L.

JIM. [*entering from R.*] Hil is the most careless scamp I ever met. As a politician he'd mislay his views.

HILARY. [*re-entering from L.*] Ah, Jim, I've found my stud. Could you—could you spare me a collar, do you think?

JIM. [*snappishly.*] Haven't you got one left?

HILARY. They're at the laundry, Jim, and—well, the laundry happens to belong to a firm with an unreasonable aversion to post-dated cheques.

JIM. Oh, that's the way, is it? All right. [HILARY *moves across as if to enter* JIM'S *room again.*] No, you don't. I'll get the collar, thank you, Hil.

HILARY. Very nice of you, Jim. Choose something quiet, will you?

Exit JIM, *R.*

WILL. You do lead poor old Jim a deuce of a dance.

HILARY. A polka, Will, merely a polka. The first dance we all learn as children. "My mother said—I never should—do anything—if another chap would."

WILL. How goes the world of Art?

HILARY. Splendidly, Will. I have had a picture accepted by the Academy and a painting accepted by the Salon.

JIM. [*re-entering from R., and bringing with him a pair of trousers, buttons, and the collar.*] Here's your collar. And mind, when you have finished with it, give it to me, not to your laundry.

HILARY. [*bowing low.*] Benefactor! I shall remember!

Exit L. buttoning on collar.

WILL. Is he going to have any breakfast?

JIM. [*who has taken needle and thread from loaf, sits R. and sews buttons on trousers.*] Well, judging from what remains of the decanter, I shouldn't say this was one of his breakfast mornings.

Enter HILARY *from L., pulling a woollen sweater over his head.*

JIM. Going to have any breakfast, Hil?

HILARY. [*with his head still in the sweater.*] Of course I am.

JIM. Peel advises haddocks.

HILARY. Well, I don't think anything else would blend very well with the aroma of the room at present. [*Goes to tube and blows down.*] Breakfast! [*Coming down C.*] Yes, Will, the world of Art is quite nice to live in just now.

WILL. Then you're making money.

HILARY. Well, no. I'm happy because I'm doing good work, and that is rarely paid for. The demand for drawings in the illustrated papers is decreasing. Editors prefer smoky photographs. You can't blame them. They're cheaper. Then so much space has to be given to

portraits—portraits of celebrities and June brides—you know the sort of thing. The "photocracy" I believe they call them.

Enter PEEL *bearing breakfast tray, on which is a haddock, coffee, bread and butter, and a packet of letters.*

PEEL. Your breakfast, Mr. Cutts. It's a nice haddock, straight from Loch Lomond, I'm told. Ah, these Scotchmen—[*laying table*]—they know what's good, sir. I'm sure if my parents could have afforded to have brought me up on porridge and haddocks, I could have sub-edited any paper in London.

HILARY. [*abstractedly. He has been examining the envelopes of the letters.*] Yes, yes, Peel. Er—clean my boots.

PEEL. [*moving towards door L.*] Certainly, sir. There's one little matter I must mention, rather an unpleasant matter, sir. You know the gentleman who occupies the flat below this.

JIM. Fat? Sandy? Spats? Diamonds? Gold pince-nez? General expression like a conscience-stricken company promoter?

PEEL. He's a member of the London County Council, and, I believe, of the Asylums Board, not to mention being a J.P.

WILL. What's his name?

PEEL. David Llewellyn Davids, sir. From Cheshire.

WILL. Ah know him. Damned ignorant brute. Ah've interviewed him in connection with my Bill. He knows no more about lunatics or Local Government than —this newspaper. [*Waving his newspaper.*]

JIM. Draper or haberdasher, isn't he?

WILL. Aye, and one of the worst sweaters in London.

PEEL. He doesn't live here regularly, of course. Indeed, I've heard him call it his pied à terre.

WILL. What's that mean?

PEEL. [*airily.*] French, sir, French. It might mean anything.

WILL. Who's that woman down there?

PEEL. Why, who but Mrs. Davids, Mr. Grain.

WILL *and* JIM *chuckle.*

JIM. Ah, Peel, the world is full of such Mrs. Davids.

HILARY. [*who has been reading his letters.*] Now, no scandal. Get to the point, Peel. Why do you mention his name?

PEEL. Well, sir, I believe it is true that there was rather a boisterous party here last night.

HILARY. Yes. Jim and I and another chap got drunk. One of the features of the evening was a Wagnerian tone poem played on three tin trunks with a poker, tongs, and shovel. There was also some comic singing. Jim insisted on inflicting upon us a plaintive ditty called "Playing the game in the West". He liked his version so much that he kept on singing it for three-quarters of an hour. Then he fell off his chair and started pulling up the boards of the floor, seeking, as he said, for hidden treasure.

PEEL. Yes, sir. A great deal of plaster fell in the room below, sir.

HILARY. I'm not surprised. Mr. Benziger will, of course, apologise to Mr. Davids.

JIM. I'll see him damned first. But you'll have to apologise, Hil.

HILARY. What did I do?

JIM. [*to* PEEL.] Do they complain of any—dampness downstairs?

PEEL. They say the ceiling of the bedroom is nearly melted away. It dripped from 1.30 till 2.15 this morning.

HILARY. Ah, there must have been a storm last night.

JIM. Soon after one o'clock this morning, Hil, you were so full of liquor that you suddenly felt a maudlin sympathy, so you said, for the poor souls who were thirsting

in Hell. So for the next hour you let the bathroom taps run wild over the floor ; a foolish proceeding, because the water does not seem to have got any farther than the Davids' flat.

HILARY. Well, what is the upshot, Peel ?

PEEL. Simply that you may expect a visit from Mr. Davids this morning. He is—er—exceedingly exasperated.

HILARY Is that all ? We shall probably be out, but he's welcome. Don't forget those boots.

Exit PEEL, *L.*

HILARY *gets sheet of notepaper from desk R., and returns to table C.*

WILL. Well, Ah'm very surprised at both of you. It'll drag you down, this drink. You can't do good work if you drug your brains, for sure.

JIM. But Hilary has been doing good work, and he's hard up. I've been doing bad work, and the public are acclaiming me nightly.

WILL. Bah ! Your plays are just a prostitution.

JIM. I'm not proud of them, but I'm proud of the fact that I can sell them.

Re-enter PEEL *from L. with boots.*

HILARY. [*who has been scribbling on the sheet of notepaper, and paying no attention to the conversation.*] Peel, I am going to commit suicide.

PEEL. Yes, sir. Didn't you like the haddock, sir ?

HILARY. I have made a will. There it is, on half a sheet of notepaper. Mr. Grain will witness it, and I want you to witness it also.

PEEL. Certainly, sir. Have you made me an executor, sir ?

HILARY. No, Peel ; you are merely a witness.

PEEL. I don't quite like that, sir. Witnesses always die, I've noticed, from reading the papers. Executors generally live.

JIM. Don't you want to die, Peel ? You're old enough.

PEEL. Well, if I may take you gentlemen into my confidence, I should like to die ; but I know it would annoy Mrs. Parsons exceedingly. One of the cats passed away on Tuesday—the grey one, gentlemen, with the ultramarine eyes—and she's been so upset and everybody in the household has suffered.

HILARY. Sign, Peel. The cat or I. You or the cat. What's the odds ? [PEEL *takes pen, and writes his name neatly with a flourish.*] There are tears for a man, tears for a dumb animal, and all of it unnecessary. It's the comedy of life. You don't read Pascal, do you, Peel ? Begin. [*Indicating bookshelf.*] Third shelf from the bottom, fifth volume from the left.

PEEL *crosses to bookshelf and takes down the volume, handling it very gingerly. He pushes his spectacles up to his forehead, and looks into the book with his eyes close to the page.* HILARY *picks up the will, glances at the signature, and laughs.*

WILL. What's the joke, Hil ?

HILARY *passes paper to* WILL, *who looks at it and laughs.* JIM *holds out his hand for it, and* WILL *throws it to him.* JIM *examines it and laughs. All are laughing together.*

WILL. Where did you get this, Peel ?

PEEL. [*who is reading.*] I beg your pardon, sir.

JIM. How did you come to be called this ?

PEEL. [*smiling.*] Ah ! My Christian names, gentlemen. Yes, my names are Pontius Pilate Peel. It happened this way. [*Resuming spectacles.*] My father, you see, was an irreligious man. He never troubled to have us christened, and one day a visiting cleric discovered the unsavoury fact. I was taken to church for the first time at the age of nine. My father didn't much care about the business, but he consented in the end, and decided to call me Machiavelli. The curate absolutely declined to give me that name, and suggested something scriptural.

So my father decided on Pontius Pilate because, as he said, I was such a dirty little beggar, and had only once been known to wash my hands. [*They laugh.*] Yes, gentlemen, he was a heathen ; but what a sense of humour ! If I may, sir, I will take this volume away with me.

HILARY. By all means, Peel.

PEEL. I will return it to-morrow, but I will ask you to excuse me now. Number 14 is having in coal at twelve o'clock, and there's a hole in Number 8's reserve dustbin that I must patch up before dinner. So you'll excuse me, and thank you, gentlemen.

Exit with boots and book.

JIM. Why this sudden outburst of generosity, Hil ? [*Waving the will.*] I don't want you to die, and I certainly don't want your property.

HILARY. Well, I'm leaving you the chattels because you will probably be sentimental enough to pay my funeral expenses.

WILL. [*growling from behind his paper.*] Ah, cut that out. It isn't decent—all this flippant talk about death and suicide.

JIM. Decency, my dear Will, is the pet shibboleth of the ignorant—and the " Spectator ".

HILARY. The indecency doesn't concern me. I'm looking forward to it, positively looking forward to it.

WILL. See here, Hil, Ah've never been able to tell whether you're serious or not, but if there is anything behind all this talk, why not let your friends into the secret ?

HILARY. [*still fingering the letters.*] Certainly. I am very shortly going to take my life—very shortly—but, of course, don't leave any sooner than you want to.

JIM. I shouldn't do it in any way likely to cause pain to your relations. Make it look as if it were an accident.

HILARY. Very thoughtful of you, Jim.

JIM. Not at all. Are you insured ?

HILARY. Good Heavens, no! You know I live absolutely from hand to mouth. I owe two months' rent for my share of this flat.

JIM. Then you are not living from hand to mouth. Blessed are they that owe, for they invariably live in luxury. But don't change the subject. How will you do it?

HILARY. I might not be able to pluck up courage enough to execute myself. Couldn't you murder me?

JIM. [*jumping up excitedly.*] By Jove, Hil, what a splendid notion!

WILL, *with an exclamation of disgust, rises and goes up to door C., picking up his hat.*

HILARY. Don't go, Will. [*Bringing him down to chair again.*] You may be able to help me. But let me settle this point with Jim first. [*To* JIM.] If I were to consent to your murdering me, should I be doing you a good turn?

JIM. Tremendous. In the first place, I don't think a man has ever consented to be murdered before in real life. It would be a new thing to do. That makes it worth while.

HILARY. But you wouldn't run the risk of being hanged, Jim, merely for the sake of testing a new sensation.

JIM. I should run no risk, as I will willingly explain to you. But it's not only for the sake of doing something novel that I am so glad of the opportunity. You know that I am a playwright—a melodramatist. Every play that I have written, or, I should say, every play of mine that has drawn royalties, contains at least two murders. I have never committed a murder. I have never seen one. Look what a tremendous advantage it would be to me to have experienced the sensation of blowing another man's brains out. I could write a murder scene that would paralyse humanity. I should—er—make more money.

HILARY. You needn't be so damned enthusiastic about it.

JIM. I can't help it. It's the chance of a lifetime.

HILARY. It would serve you right if you were afterwards hanged for it.

JIM. Impossible. You have a revolver? Of course. And cartridges? Of course. You give me the weapon. I shoot you close to the temple and kill you. I rouse the house after placing the revolver in your hand. The police find you with a letter in your pocket admitting your intentions. I swear that I witnessed the deed, and was too late to prevent it. Voilà tout!

HILARY *coughs, walks to the fireplace and fills his pipe from the jar.*

HILARY. You're a selfish devil, Jim.

JIM. Not at all. If you wish to live I am the last to interfere. If you wish to die, why not employ me to effect what you would never have the courage to do yourself?

HILARY. Hang your reasoning. If I've got to die, I'll stage-manage the business myself. I'm not particularly squeamish, but I don't like the idea of selling my body before it's cold. That's what it comes to.

JIM. Pah! You're sentimental.

HILARY. Sentimental! What a charge! Do either of you men know who my father was?

JIM. No. [WILL *shakes his head.*]

HILARY. You don't! [*Down C.*] Pull up your trousers. [*Both stare at him in amazement.*] Pull them up, I tell you. [*They do so with muttered comments.*] Higher! [*They pull them almost to the knee, revealing sock-suspenders.* JIM'S *socks are very gay,* WILL'S *very homely.*] I thought so! [*Pointing dramatically at their suspenders.*] "Cutts' Unslippable Sock-suspender." The invention that made my father famous—brought him a fortune and a knighthood. Ever since 1875 my father has had his grip on the calves of the aristocracy. True, he is now dead, but his handiwork reposes at this moment under every well-cut trouser in the civilised globe.

WILL. So you're the son of Sir Nathaniel Cutts. [HILARY *nods.*]

JIM. Left rather a peculiar will, didn't he? [HILARY *nods.*] Odd that I should never have connected you with him. But you have always been such a secretive beggar about your family.

HILARY. I have good reason. But you shall hear something of them now. Nathaniel Cutts, my father, married one of his shop assistants. He acquired great wealth from his haberdashery business, and more particularly from the exploitation of the Unslippable Sock-suspender. He eagerly spent his thousands on the education of his children, myself, Ian, Millicent, Angus, Evelyn, Roy, Stephanie, Marcus, Miriam, Maximilian, Ellaline, and Cyril. My mother named us all. We boys went to a famous public school, and most of us afterwards to universities; the girls were over-educated by sentimental professors at home. Unfortunately, the family turned out badly. I, the eldest, proved a shocking scapegrace, and nearly broke my father's heart. I was forbidden the privilege of crossing the family threshold at the age of twenty-two. My brothers and sisters were really no better. They were even less capable than I; but they adroitly managed to retain a semblance of the parental favour. My mother was the first to die, followed by my father six months later. I was then thirty-three.

The will, as you say, Jim, was a remarkable document. It decreed that the money was to be divided equally among the children, with the exception of me. I was to have absolutely nothing. It seems a cruel arrangement, but there were good reasons for the old man's bitterness.

WILL. [*bluntly.*] What were they?

HILARY. I don't care about repeating a very unpleasant story. Not only was I to derive no benefit from my father's estate, but during my lifetime the same disability attached to my brothers and sisters. The old man

had cunningly guessed that cutting me out of his will would by no means prevent me from living comfortably on my brothers' and sisters' money. He knew that I was the idol of the family, and that his wishes as to the disposal of the money would certainly be thwarted. He therefore decided on this very eccentric scheme. The whole of his property was to be capitalised, and the interest was to be allowed to accumulate until such time as I chose to die. Then, and not till then, my eleven brothers and sisters would have his fortune.

JIM. The hard-hearted old skinflint.

WILL. He should have given his money to charity sooner than do that.

HILARY. When the terms of the will were known, I promptly became very unpopular with my brothers and sisters. My continued existence was irksome to them. The youngest, Cyril, had just turned nineteen, so that all were of an age at which work is endurable. To their credit, I must say that they all made an attempt to earn a living. There was, indeed, nothing else for them to do.

WILL. Why didn't they borrow on the reversion?

HILARY. There was a clause in the will forbidding anticipation.

WILL. H'm. That settles it.

HILARY. Of all the twelve I was the most successful. I alone had any sort of individuality. I did fairly well as a designer of stained-glass windows, and afterwards as a full-fledged artist. But my tastes were expensive. I borrowed more than I made. I gave away more than I borrowed.

One by one my brothers and sisters found me out. Each one of them begged of me. They imagined I made more than was actually the case. The whole eleven were failures—the girls because they were plain, and the boys because they were too ornamental. Hardly a day passes on which I do not receive a despairing letter from at least

one of them. Their appeals to me, the cause of all their troubles, worry me to distraction. I like them all. I know that it is not their fault that they are failures, and I am intensely conscious of the fact that only my physical being stands between them and happiness.

WILL. And that's the reason why you contemplate suicide?

HILARY. It is. I can't stand it any longer. This morning there are letters from six—actually six of them. They're tragic, awful letters! They'd bring tears to the eyes of a statue.

WILL. Can't you get this will set aside?

HILARY. No. Similar wills have been made before on at least two occasions. Every legal weapon was employed to revoke them, but the wills stood. Even if there were a chance, where is the money to come from for the legal expenses?

JIM. You seem to have got more than your fair share of misery, Hil.

HILARY. It's worse for them. Listen to this [*opening a letter*]—"I only want three-and-six. It will get me a bed and food for the week, and I've a promise of work on Monday. If I don't get the money to sleep indoors I'll get my clothes worse, and they're very bad now. A clerk has got to dress decently. I met Miriam accidentally yesterday. She's living with Ella. Ella's very ill, she told me, but Miriam is getting fourteen shillings at a tea-shop. She wanted to give me sixpence, but I'm damned if I'd take it from her. Send me the money if you can, old man. I don't want to shame you by calling on you as I am.—Your brother, ROY.

"*P.S.*—Oh, my God, what wouldn't I give to be able to shave every day."

They're all like that. Ella, it seems, is dying from consumption. And there's one here from another sister. She's hard up, she says. She's very hard up. She says

—she says—there's scent on the paper. She says—she writes from 17A Apollo Mansions, Shaftesbury Avenue. She wants money to keep her—and something else—alive. She doesn't know who—

Crushes the letters up and throws them in the fire, remaining at fireplace, with his head buried in his arms.

WILL. It's very dreadful for you, Hil, but Ah don't see yet why you should sacrifice yourself for them. How much money will they get each when you die ?

HILARY. Ten thousand pounds.

WILL. Ten thousand pounds !

JIM. Really, as much as that !

HILARY. It might be more. It increases every moment of the day.

WILL. And you propose to kill yourself—the only member of the family likely to be any good in the world—just for the sake of putting all that money into the hands of people who obviously could only go to the devil on it. What good is the money going to do to them or the world when you release it ?

HILARY. Argued like a Socialist, Will. Do you think I don't realise how illogical such a step would be ? But that doesn't save me from taking it. You fellows want us to accept Government by brain. Well and good. But you must first cut out our hearts. Goodness knows I don't want brothers and sisters to love, but I've got 'em, and by a law of nature I must love 'em. If I were a reasonable man I should ignore 'em, let 'em go to the devil. But I'm not reasonable. A blood tie stifles reason. You Socialists are transcendently irrational because you expect humanity to be rational. We are not rational. We never shall be. The old saying, " Blood is thicker than water " simply means " Humanity is too human to be humane ". Suppose you have a deformed child. You ought to destroy it. But if the State let you, you wouldn't

do it. You preach—the whole jim bang lot of you—a code which you yourselves could never practise.

WILL. Ah don't know that Ah suggested you should send them to the devil. Ah certainly didn't intend to. What Ah say is that a man's life belongs to the nation and to Heaven and you're—

JIM. Spare us that, Will.

WILL. Oh, Ah can see my advice isn't wanted, but—

HILARY. Nonsense, Will, don't let's quarrel.

WILL. Ah'm not going to quarrel, but Ah say that any man who encourages you to take that cowardly way out of trouble is a bad friend.

HILARY. Will, do you realise the state of affairs those letters reveal? My younger brothers, my younger sisters, starving. Poor bodies, poor brains, but my flesh and blood. They've worked, they've striven, but the world's been too much for them. They weren't born for or to expect hard fighting. They're all gone, or going under. It's awful, awful, awful. The little sisters, Jim, I used to escort to parties. Pretty, pink little kids they were then, in their little lace frocks and silk stockings, coloured ribbons, and long loose hair. Little dears. Little dears. Excuse me sniffling. Then the boys, tough little chaps they seemed once. They worshipped me, the oldest, the biggest, the strongest. They fagged for me, swore by me, lied for me, and yes—God bless 'em—to me. Jim, I can't let them go right under. I didn't mind their having troubles. When they grew older and more smug, I lost a lot of my love for 'em. But at a time like this it comes back—the old feeling. Blood, blood, blood—it rules the will, the brain. They'll be no good to any one when they get the money. I'm some good as I am. My work's good. I might yet produce something that the world would be glad of, pleased always to remember. They never will. Yet I must die. It's my duty. I'm sinning every moment I live. To live—to sin! Is that a paradox?

It's a new sin, Jim. To sin by living! It is wrong of me not to destroy myself. But it's hard, hard, damned hard.

JIM *rises and lays his hand on* HILARY'S *shoulder. Then exit R.*

WILL. Ah'm real sorry for you, Hil, and Ah'm not going to say any more to influence you one way or the other. It's a job only one man can tackle and you're the only one that's got the hang of it. But if you want to end your life, don't ever be such a fool as to strike the blow yourself.

HILARY. You mean I ought to close with Jim's interesting offer.

WILL. No, no, nothing of the sort. Jim's a humbug.

HILARY. Then what on earth do you mean?

WILL. Hil, there are many things a man can do if he is willing to surrender his life. A human life can buy great benefits for humanity.

HILARY. Do, do explain, Will.

WILL. Supposing you were to kill some one, Hil. Well, you would be hanged. Unpleasant, but so is shooting, poisoning, or drowning oneself. Suppose the man you selected to kill were some evil-living brute in high places, some scourge of humanity that the law is powerless to touch. Then you would not have sacrificed your life entirely in vain. Ah'm not an anarchist. Ah'm no enemy of Kings—God help them in these days—but Ah've got the lust for the blood of several men Ah might name. Wouldn't it be easy to find one? Some slave-driving Christian, for example. Some wealthy beast who buys the chastity of children, some money-mad brute that sweats our youth and pitches the middle-aged into the street. There's plenty of them. The wrongs of the proletariat—

Enter JIM *dressed for the street, from R.*

JIM. Ah, Will, practising for Hyde Park? I'm going to the Post Office. I'll go down to the bus with you.

Up to door C.

WILL. [*surlily.*] All right, Jim.

JIM. I shall be back in a few minutes, Hil. We'll talk it over a little more calmly then. Don't listen to old Will. He's too practical for this age of romance.

Exit C.

WILL. [*goes after* JIM, *turns back and comes down to* HILARY.] Look here, Hil, Ah'm a Member of Parliament. You can get a will like this set aside by an Act of Parliament. Ah know that much. My brother's chairman of the Labour Party. Ah'll ask him what he can do. This Government can do nothing without our votes. We've got them under our thumbs. Ah'll get him to force 'em to put a Bill through. Ah'll make it right yet, Hil. Ah'll make it right.

Exit C.

HILARY. [*laughing cynically.*] Dear old Will! [*He goes to door C., then down to table C., then back to window L.C., and putting his head out, watches his departing friends. He shuts the window and crosses R.C., to desk. He takes out of a drawer a parcel containing revolver and cartridges and proceeds to load the weapon.*] It's a fascinating thing, this. Made to kill men. Never be used again. Locked up in a glass case in Scotland Yard, or possibly purchased by an amateur criminologist. What was Will's idea? Kill some one else and get hanged for it. Not a bad notion. Difficult to work up any indignation, though, against the people Will mentioned. He suggested a slave-driving Christian, I think, or a perverter of youthful morals, or—let me see—what was the other type?

Enter PEEL, *C.*

PEEL. Mr. David Llewellyn Davids!

Enter MR. DAVIDS, *C., very pompously;* HILARY *stands with his back to the audience, facing* DAVIDS, *holding the revolver behind his back.*

MR. DAVIDS *is slightly corpulent and of medium height. His hair is sandy and is dressed oilily and flamboyantly like a cheap barber's. He wears spats, diamonds, and gold pince-nez. His silk hat gleams brightly, and his grey frock suit outlines his fat, but not, therefore, ungraceful figure.*

CURTAIN

ACT II

Scene as at the conclusion of the first Act. PEEL *has gone, but* DAVIDS *and* HILARY *are facing each other as before, the latter still holding the revolver behind his back.*

HILARY. [*gradually slipping revolver into his pocket so that* DAVIDS *does not notice it.*] Good morning. I suppose you want to know the why and the wherefore of the row up here last night.

DAVIDS. [*whose voice is thick, and has an improved Cockney twang.*] Last night and this morning.

HILARY. Take a chair. [DAVIDS *sits on chair back of table C.*] We, of course, owe you an apology—myself and my friends.

HILARY, *during following conversation, circles round and round* DAVIDS, *sometimes getting close to him and handling the revolver in his pocket, and then breaking away again impulsively.*

DAVIDS. I reckon you do. Haven't you had any complaints from other people in the flats ?

HILARY. No. They are accustomed to us. We are accustomed to them. This building is hardly the place that an exhausted city man would choose for a rest cure.

DAVIDS. Look here. I don't want any of your sarcasm. I've got it in my agreement that any tenant whose conduct is offensive to other residents in the building may be [*glancing at a pencilling on his cuff*] summarily ejected.

HILARY. And do you know that it is also in our respective agreements that coal may only be delivered on

Saturday mornings, and then before ten o'clock; that dogs, live animals, actors, and hawkers are barred, and that broken whisky bottles may not be hurled from the windows at the heads of the passengers in the street? I do. Now, these restrictions, Mr. Davids, make life very complicated, don't they?

DAVIDS. Well, ain't it all necessary? What's the good of renting a place where you can't have a little peace and quiet when you want it?

HILARY. But do you want peace and quiet?

DAVIDS. Of course I do.

HILARY. How wonderfully interesting!

DAVIDS. When a man's been working hard all day he's earned his rest, and I'm damned well going to have it while I pay my rent here.

HILARY. I think you're deceiving yourself, Mr. Davids. You don't want peace and quiet. Oh, no you don't. The successful business man, in my experience, slumbers all day and wants to wake up at night. There is a ridiculous notion abroad that we are all tired when the day's work is done. It is quite false. The enervation of routine provokes a craving for excitement. Successful men, and all men are successful who work and are paid for working, are so blandly contented and cheerful during the daytime that they simply cannot resist the desire to do something strenuous at night. They must have excitement, as hectic as possible.

DAVIDS. I don't say that it isn't a relief to go to a musical comedy or some funny play during the evening after the storm and stress of business.

HILARY. But there is no storm and stress in business. Think it over. You and I know hosts of business men. We've worked with them and seen them working. Pallid, haggard lot, aren't they? Never seen 'em laugh, eh? Never seen 'em drink? Never hear 'em tell a risky story? Hair on end all day, isn't it? Nine o'clock to

nine. No time for meals. No lengthy lunches with the typist. All rush, hustle, and worry, isn't it?

DAVIDS. Well, it ain't so bad as all that.

HILARY. No? That's a very frank admission from a business man. No, Mr. Davids, it is not in the least like that. Not more than one employer of labour in ten does more than a couple of hours' work a day. I don't reproach them. I abhor busy people. But I do think it is time that ridiculous old fairy tale were exposed. Look round at the entertainments at the theatres in London.

DAVIDS. Yes, nearly all light stuff. Something to make a man laugh and take him out of himself.

HILARY. Precisely. Doesn't it disgust you?

DAVIDS. I don't see why it should.

HILARY. Doesn't the success of these things disgust you? The business man is told they're good for him. Just the thing for his poor tired brain. It flatters him. He doesn't in the least know what a poor tired brain is, but it is so splendidly British to believe you have one. People simply adore being told that they are tired and weary. They feel, oh! so interesting. And off they go to the Gaiety to be cheered up. It's true that they have been in a condition of semi-hysterical cheerfulness all day, but that must never be admitted. Now what people really want, Mr. Davids, is to be harrowed. They would enjoy being miserable, but they never dare admit anything of the sort. Therefore the poor wretches are forced to patronise musical comedy. On the stage what you call the "light stuff" owes its success entirely to the fact that John Bull will wear his hat over his eyes.

DAVIDS. I didn't come up here to be told that. I came up to tell you what I thought of you, and you've—

HILARY. I've been analysing your complaint, and have proved, I hope to your satisfaction, that you are protesting under a misconception.

DAVIDS. [*stammering.*] I don't know whether you are trying to pull my leg or not.

HILARY. Not for one moment, Mr. Davids. You interest me.

DAVIDS. [*rather pleased.*] Do I? I say, do you go in for literary work—write for the papers and so on?

HILARY. No. I draw for the papers.

DAVIDS. Ha! An artist, eh? That's interesting. Where do you work? Not here?

HILARY. My studio is on the top floor.

DAVIDS. Got a studio, have you? I suppose you turn out a good bit.

HILARY. I keep pegging away.

DAVIDS. What sort of work do you do? Any painting, or only comic pictures?

HILARY. I paint a little. There is a picture of mine in this year's Academy.

DAVIDS. Go on!

HILARY. It's true. I don't want to deceive you.

DAVIDS. Then you're an R.A.

HILARY. Oh, no, no!

DAVIDS. But I thought that made you an R.A.

HILARY. Not necessarily. The stigma is avoidable.

DAVIDS. Well, there! Picture in the Academy, eh? No wonder you're a bit of a Bohemian. What do you paint? Girls?

HILARY. Very often.

DAVIDS. Then—I—er—I—er—suppose you employ models, eh?

HILARY. Frequently.

DAVIDS. Oh, you dog! [*Chuckling and digging* HILARY *in the ribs.*] Ah, woman! lovely woman! Where would the world be without her?

HILARY. It is easy to imagine and terribly difficult to realise.

DAVIDS. There you go again. I'd have bet anything

you wrote for the papers. I shall have to drop into your studio one day when it is convenient.

HILARY. [*icily*.] That would be very pleasant.

DAVIDS. You know I've artistic ideas myself, and I do a bit of writing too. I know I'm a draper, but that isn't going to bar me from courting the Muses. Would you like to see something I've written? [*Pulling out a paper and giving it to* HILARY.]

HILARY. [*glancing at it*.] Poetry!

DAVIDS. Yes. You needn't read it all. That's the verse I like best. [*Indicating it*.]

HILARY. [*reading it*].

"The scent of summer flowers she breathed
Asleep on petals newly crushed—
A virgin wanton pose!
And gleams of tender bareness flushed
From amber veilings that enwreathed
Her skin of satin rose."

DAVIDS. You do read it nicely. What do you think of it?

HILARY. Disgusting! [*Handing back paper*.]

DAVIDS. [*doubtfully*.] Is it? You don't think it goes too far, do you? I was going to send it to a paper.

HILARY. Don't.

HILARY *takes revolver from his pocket and puts it on desk R., putting newspaper over it.*

DAVIDS. Have you ever written any poetry yourself?

HILARY. Once. It took me a week to write and polish it—four stanzas only. It was published and I was awarded a postal order for 7s. 6d.

DAVIDS. Ah, you mustn't look on the financial side of art. I am quite willing to pay for the publication of my poems. I'm sure most people have to. Have you got to-day's "Daily Mail"? Ah, is this it? [*Rising and going to desk*.] Now, if any—Hello! [*Noticing revolver*.]

What's this? Is this your burglar scarer? Fully loaded too, ain't it?

HILARY. Yes. You interrupted my use of it when you came in.

DAVIDS. What? Have you had the burglars in?

HILARY. Oh, no. I was about to use it on myself.

DAVIDS. Ha, ha, ha! Going to commit suicide, eh? Ain't there a lot of it about just now?

HILARY. [*smiling.*] I suppose there is. I'm in the fashion.

DAVIDS. It's a notion I could never understand. Mind you, I've had my morbid periods. But I cured myself in a very remarkable manner. Look here. [*He produces a booklet from his inside pocket.*] Have a look at this. [*Handing book to* HILARY.] I compiled that myself.

HILARY. [*examining book.*] "At the Sign of the Merrythought", being a collection of optimistic epigrams and axioms, compiled from the works of famous authors by David Llewellyn Davids, J.P., L.C.C., M.A.B.

DAVIDS. And the arrangement is alphabetical.

HILARY. Quite so. [*Reading index.*] "Art, Books, Cleverness, Death, Drink, Emotion, Fools, Friends, Girls, Happiness, Heart, Honour, Ideals, Knowledge, Life, Love, Man, Marriage, Miscellaneous, People, Personalities, Philosophy, Proverbs, Religion, Sentiment, Theories, Thoughts, Troubles, Truth, Vice, Virtue, Weather, Wisdom and Woman!"

DAVIDS. Threepence in paper, sixpence in cloth. I paid for the publication, but I've had some of my money back. By compiling that book, I forced myself to look always on the bright side of things.

HILARY. I think it would depress me.

DAVIDS. Not a bit. You contemplate death. Turn up page 42. Quotations from the "Wreck of the 'Hesperus'" and "Casabianca". Off you go to lunch at Romano's.

HILARY. [*laughing almost heartily.*] Hardly a recipe for a poor man.

DAVIDS. Suppose you've got indigestion. Turn up Miscellaneous! Quotations from Brillat-Savarin and Sir John Suckling. Just the thing. In five minutes you're dancing the can-can and swooning for food. Nothing like dancing for the dumps. I once took a widow who had lost her fortune to a Covent Garden ball. She ate fourteen oyster patties that night. There was a waltz we had that I shall never forget. Let's see. How did it go? [*Hums the air of a popular waltz.*] Give me your hand.

Takes HILARY'S *hand, puts his arm round his waist and waltzes awkwardly with him, humming the tune the while.*

Enter PEEL *suddenly, C. He places* HILARY'S *boots just inside the door, blows his nose deprecatorily with a large handkerchief and exit.*

DAVIDS. [*bursting into a roar of laughter.*] That old man tickles me no end. Well, don't you feel better now, my boy? I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll have a real Bohemian lunch. I'll run out and get a good cold hamper and a couple of bottles of bubbly—just to celebrate our acquaintance, eh?

HILARY. I can hardly refuse.

DAVIDS. Of course you can't, my boy. We're going to get on well together. You're just my style. Don't care a damn for anybody, least of all for yourself. Well, I shan't be more than a few minutes.

HILARY. [*at window.*] I see it's raining heavily. How does the "Sign of the Merrythought" help you now?

DAVIDS. Here you are, my boy. [*Producing book.*] Page 72. "'The year hath but one June, dear friend.' Ella Wheeler Wilcox."

Exit DAVIDS, *C., almost colliding with* JIM BENZIGER, *who looks him over superciliously.*

JIM. [*closing door after* DAVIDS.] So the ogre has paid his threatened visit.

HILARY. Yes. And, d'y'know, I rather like him.

JIM. Bought a picture?

HILARY. No, but probably would. I like his way of laughing. It reminds you of big things. I should like to take him into the heart of a Pyramid and make him laugh at a mummified king.

JIM. It looks as if he had cured you of that notion of suicide.

HILARY. He has side-tracked it at any rate. I am going to have a good lunch at his expense, my boy, here—within these very walls.

A sudden altercation is heard without between PEEL *and* MAXIMILIAN CUTTS.

MAX. I'm going in, I tell you. I'm not a writ server, you old fool. I'm Mr. Cutts' brother.

Pulls C. door sharply open, bursts in, but stops sharp at the doorway. He is a youngster of about twenty-three, and is rather dejected in appearance. His shoulders are rounded and his carriage that of a bullied man. He wears shabby serge, ill cut. His brown boots are not brown. He carries a bowler hat in his bare hands. His face is very pale. He has paper coverings on his cuffs.

HILARY. Max!

Rises and extends his hand.

MAX. Hello, Hil.

Taking it limply.

HILARY. What's brought you round?

MAX. I thought I'd—

Looks deprecatingly round at JIM, *who takes the hint.*

JIM. I'm off, Hilary. I shall look in later and sample the ogre's lunch.

HILARY. Right, Jim, and bring Will with you.

Exit C.

HILARY. Sit down, Max. Fill your pipe.

MAX. No, thanks. I can't smoke.

Sits L.

HILARY. Rats! Smoke, man, smoke.

MAX. Hil, old man, by God, I'm—I'm hungry.

HILARY. [*reeling slightly and then standing motionless like a statue.*] Not breakfasted, eh? Careless devil. We'll soon see to that. [*Goes to tube and whistles.*] Is that you, Peel? Send me up another breakfast, bacon and eggs, toast and coffee. [*Goes down to* MAX *but not too near him.*] I'm damned sorry, Max.

MAX. All right, Hil. But it's been awful.

HILARY. I know, I know. But tell me how it happened. You had a job at a draper's, hadn't you? You told me that you got fifteen shillings a week and lived in.

MAX. I got the sack.

Enter PEEL, *looking very miserable.*

PEEL. I beg your pardon, sir, but can I speak to you privately?

HILARY. [*scenting what is coming.*] No, Peel. Shout it out.

PEEL. [*brokenly.*] Well, sir, I beg your pardon, sir, but the mistress says you can't have any more breakfast until the last month's bills are paid.

HILARY. Thank you. Convey my compliments to your mistress, and tell her that I have pleasure in cancelling the order.

Exit PEEL *on the verge of breaking into tears.*

MAX. It's that way, Hil, is it?

HILARY. Yes.

HILARY *goes to the sideboard and brings out a pot of jam, a bag of biscuits, and two apples.* MAX *spreads the jam on the biscuits with a spoon and eats ravenously.*

HILARY. Why were you sacked, Max?

MAX. They fired me for—for—a girl in the mantles.

The first, Hil, the first. I'm twenty-three—and the first. We couldn't help it.

He chokes horribly over a dry biscuit.

HILARY. Heaven help you, dear old Max. Did you tell the management what you thought of them?

MAX. What's the good? What's the good?

HILARY. Max, you always miss your opportunities. I should rather have liked at the age of twenty-three to have been sacked for—for a girl in the mantles. It would have fired my eloquence. I should have said several things, quiet things, things that strike across the mouth and leave a trickle of blood. You are a pitiable figure, a poor man who doesn't know how to make the best of things.

MAX. I would have done, Hil, but I haven't got your knack. I dry up when a man tells me I'm a dirty hound —and proves it.

HILARY. Proves it. Damn him! Proves it. Did he take his cigar out of his mouth while he said it? Did he fold his fat fingers, stare through you with his fishy eyes? I can see him serving out his sentence, Max. Wasn't the room full of the wraiths of the poor anæmic little shop-girls that he had persecuted? Didn't you point them out to him? Heaven bless my soul, why didn't you kill him? You might have smashed him—smashed him! These beasts never have any muscle. You could have crushed his head, Max, under your thin, brown boots. You could have mangled him. Oh, how you've made me see blood!

MAX. Don't get excited about it, Hil, old boy. It don't do any good. And you mustn't forget our father kept big shops and made people live in. He might have been like this brute.

HILARY. He might. He might. He probably was, Max. Our mother, you know, she—

MAX. She forced him.

HILARY. How the devil do you know ?

MAX. We all know, don't we ? She told Millicent one day, and Millicent has told us all at different times.

HILARY. Ah ! What her life must have been like, eh, Max ?

MAX. Awful. Have you got any water ?

HILARY. Yes, and better—a little whisky.

HILARY *gets him a long tumbler of whisky and water.*

HILARY. What are you going to do now, Max ?

MAX. Starve.

The man says it in an awful way. He means it.

HILARY. Didn't he give you a character ?

MAX. Wasn't fool enough to ask for one after what he said.

HILARY. What did he say ?

MAX. Said I was an unscrupulous scoundrel, that I couldn't afford to marry, and, therefore, had no right to have anything to do with women. He reckoned I was one of the curses of civilisation, living just for amusement, he said I was. Once I could have grinned at that. But all the time he was speaking I was thinking " My living's gone— my living's gone." He kept calling me a dirty hound. I was blushing—burning. It sounded as if he was right. But he wasn't, was he, Hil ?

For a moment HILARY *does not answer. He sits very still in his chair.*

HILARY. I have never known the name of the shop you worked at.

MAX. Davids, London Wall.

HILARY. [*without any surprise.*] Davids, eh ? David Llewellyn Davids ? Short ? Slightly corpulent ? Hair dressed like a barber's ? Fat hands ? Big laugh ?

MAX. That's him. Do you know him ?

HILARY. Life bristles with coincidences. It's getting worse than the drama. Yes, I know him.

MAX. Oh, Hil, do you think you could get him to take me back?

HILARY. [*almost shouting.*] Max!

MAX. Ah, Hil, I haven't got any principles left. I couldn't bear to starve. It's not the pain of it, but I want to live. I want just to live till—

HILARY. Till I die? [MAX's *head sinks between his shoulders.*] Of course it is only natural.

MAX. I don't wish you harm, Hil. I swear I don't. But I'm one of the youngest of our family, mind. I'm at the age when money's wanted most, and wanted for the things that young chaps want. Most of you other boys have had your good time. I've never tasted anything except school, and I hated that because I wasn't strong. [*Helps himself to more whisky and water.*] The other day I saw Dallas—he went up from form to form with me. He was in a car, a long car, with silver fittings, and he had a girl with him, a little girl wrapped up in furs with a pink face and gentle eyes. I watched them go by, and, as I watched them, I could feel the hair on my face that I couldn't afford to have shaved off. I felt sick inside, and my head was light. By God, I shall have a car some day.

MAX *is getting more and more excited under the influence of the whisky.*

HILARY. You suffer because you have no philosophy, no art to fall back on. I have had experiences like that, but I am philosopher enough to find satisfaction in such opulent displays. Envy is the easiest pain in the world to assuage if you have imagination.

MAX. I haven't got any art to help me. The only thing I'm any good at is singing comic songs. I've had five bob more than once for singing at a pub smoker.

HILARY. Heavens, Max! Where did you learn to sing comic songs?

MAX. At the music hall. We could always go to the first house and get back in time.

HILARY. And you learnt those songs and sang them to beery audiences in public-houses. You, Maximilian Cutts, son of Sir Nathaniel Cutts?

MAX. [*chuckling mirthlessly.*] Cutts, eh? That's funny. My name's Cutts, is it? I'd forgotten that.

HILARY. Forgotten it. What do you mean, Max?

MAX. I was known as Williams at the shop. You see the man who did my work before I came was called Williams. It saves a lot of confusion, and they always do it in draper's shops. The man who gets my job will be called Williams, no matter what his name may be.

HILARY. What an extraordinary arrangement!

MAX. Is it? I've never thought about it. It made a difference to one of our chaps, though. He was the third from the door in the gloves, and the third from the door in the gloves is Mr. Sinclair, always has been and always will be. Well, he was secretly engaged to a girl in the ribbons, and not so long ago they moved him from the gloves to the vests and pants to take the place of a chap that died. Well, the dead chap was known as Mr. Green, so poor old Sinclair had to change his name to Mr. Green. And you'll hardly believe it, but the girl broke it off and took up with the new Sinclair.

Helps himself to another glass of whisky.

HILARY. [*smiling.*] Then there's something in a name after all.

MAX. Rather! Cutts, indeed. You could have called at that shop and asked for Cutts till you were black in the face. Williams I was, second from the cash desk in the artificial flowers. . . Still, I used to think of it at nights, Hil, when the other two fellows in my room didn't snore. I used to lie awake and think of the money that's waiting —of just what I'd buy, and the sort of fine girl I'd marry. And then the smell of that foul old barrack would get in my nose, and I'd curse you a bit, Hil. But only just as a brother would, old chap.

HILARY. Don't excuse yourself, Max. I know what it has meant for all of you. I'm ashamed that I did not make up my mind before.

The C. door is flung open and DAVIDS *enters boisterously, singing "Bringing the Sunday dinner home". He carries a large hamper in his hands and under each arm is a bottle of champagne. He comes down C. and places the hamper on the table C.*

DAVIDS. Relieve me of the bubbly, or I'll drop it. [HILARY *goes to him and relieves him of the bottles.*] There's a game pie in here as big as a house. You'll have to bring in some of your pals. Hello! [*Noticing* MAX.] I didn't notice you had any company. Intro—Here! I've seen this young fellow before.

HILARY. This is my brother, Mr. Maximilian Cutts.

DAVIDS. Remarkable likeness! I took him for a young chap I had in my shop, called Williams.

MAX. [*who has had sufficient whisky on an empty stomach to make him courageous.*] Yes, Williams—that's me—second from the cash desk in the artificial flowers.

DAVIDS. What! And you're this gentleman's brother?

HILARY. Certainly, Mr. Davids. You have no objection, I suppose, to his lunching with us.

DAVIDS. Here—damn it!

MAX. [*laughing mirthlessly.*] Lord bless you, Hil, what a notion! Mr. David Llewellyn Davids lunch with his discharged employé! Not a hope!

DAVIDS. Here, I don't like this business. Did you bring this brother of yours here on purpose?

HILARY. He came to me because he was starving.

DAVIDS. And serve him damned well right, too. The dirty little hound's not—

HILARY. That's enough, Mr. Davids. Your opinion on—

MAX. Leave this to me, Hil. [*Going straight up to*

DAVIDS *and speaking straight in his face.*] Look here, Mr. Davids, we're level now. You can say what you like, but I can say what I like. And I'm going to put you in your place. How do you like that?

DAVIDS. The little beast's been drinking, hasn't he? [*To* HILARY.]

MAX. Drinking, eh? Well, it isn't your fault I'm not a corpse by now. You got rid of me, you kicked me out, but I'm going to get level.

DAVIDS. [*turning disgustedly from* MAX *and going to* HILARY.] I don't want anything to do with this fellow. If he's your brother, I'm sorry for you. You don't deserve it. But I like you, and I'll tell you why I got rid of him.

MAX. Oh, damn your explanations. I'm not going—

HILARY. Max, Max! There is plenty of time for that. Let us hear what Mr. Davids has to say.

DAVIDS. [*dropping into a chair.*] Well, you've got to understand I'm not on my defence. But it'll do you good to hear my views. I've not been a master all my life. I know what I'm talking about. I've been in just a similar sort of position to this young fool. I've lived in a draper's shop and earned fifteen bob a week.

MAX. Yes, and look at you now. You're exactly what I've had to look forward to. With the best of luck I might one day become like you.

DAVIDS. What d'ye mean? I tell you I had fifteen bob a week and lived in, but I saved, and I've kept my hands clean. I saved and saved, and if a woman's face got in my way and made me feel weak, I punished myself by saving more. Sex-starvation, they call it. It's awful, but it can be done because it must be done. And everywhere it is done. The Civil Service, for instance, is crowded with cases. There are one or two of them in every private firm. Some men it don't harm. Others in middle age it drives to a phase of childish imbecility.

You've got to chance your luck and save your money till you can buy your partner.

HILARY. And knowing all that, you are harsh on the boy of twenty-three who has not the character to wait—and wait—and risk his chance of imbecility.

DAVIDS. Pardon me, sir, I know when a case should be treated harshly or not. Look at that young rascal. It's women, drink, cigarettes, and betting that make up his life.

MAX. Liar! I never had anything to do with a girl before this one; I swear it, Hil.

DAVIDS. Of course you hadn't. But you talked and dreamt of nothing else. You sniggered over nothing else. There was nothing else that drew you to music halls with your companions. It was the one topic of conversation pretty nearly every time you sat down to a meal. You'd even make coarse remarks about the lady customers you'd served. [*Turning to* HILARY.] What in Heaven's name is the good of that sort of breed? Is it any good to the country? You can tell me his sin was natural. But so is all sin. It's the unnatural people and our unnatural laws that make existence possible. A pretty state of affairs we should come to if employers were to overlook vice of that description—because it couldn't be helped. It can be helped.

HILARY. Yes, Mr. Davids. If you catch a mouse, you kill it. But can you blame the mouse for being caught?

DAVIDS. How d'ye mean? I don't bait traps.

HILARY. No, but you keep the mice too close to the cat.

DAVIDS. Pah! Men and women have to mix. I've no respect for these blessed Turks with the harems and veiled women. A lot of cowards, that's what they are.

HILARY. I don't suggest that you should segregate the sexes entirely. But it's not good that men and women should be together all day when they are young. It is not good that they should be employed on similar work. If

Mabel sells ribbons on one side of the shop, George should not be selling artificial flowers on the other side.

DAVIDS. Why?

HILARY. Mabel thinks she is as good as George, and George thinks he is no worse than Mabel. The sexes were never meant to be equal. Either man or woman must be accepted as the superior. If woman en masse insisted on absolute equality with man there would be considerable fecundity — but a slump in population. If she insisted on superiority, all would be well. But there is no hope of that. Women are so selfish.

MAX. [*who has been sitting with his face buried in his arms during this argument, now lifts his head impulsively. There are tears in his eyes, maudlin tears of self-pity.*] Oh, God, how you talk. I've slid into the mud and you talk and talk to this devil. Talk, talk, talk, and I'm starving. And that fat hog sits between us with his hamper and his champagne posing as a censor of morals. Why don't you kick him out?

DAVIDS. See here, young man. What do you think is going to happen to that young woman you ruined?

HILARY. Steady, Mr. Davids, perhaps she ruined herself.

DAVIDS. I don't care. He's legally responsible. That young woman's got to go away. She ain't a bad young woman, and I'll have her back. But who's going to pay? I am. She hasn't got any parents, so I've got to. D'ye think I don't run risks doing that? Doesn't it get talked about? Not for me to hear, mind you. It does get talked about and I get the blame. Has that side struck you, you little fool?

HILARY. You ought to pay. You're to blame in the beginning. You didn't start this system, but you perpetuate it in its worst form, so you must take its kicks with its halfpence.

DAVIDS. Oh, I'm to blame, am I? Well, suppose I don't pay. Suppose I turn the girl out and put the police on this young blackguard.

HILARY. You daren't. It's to your interest to hush up all your shop scandals. You know that public opinion would insist on a clean sweep of all such places if the real facts were known. In fact, you're only too anxious to pay.

MAX. Yes, by God, and I could tell a story if they put me to it. What happened to Miss Edwards and Miss Norrys and Miss—

DAVIDS. Shut your mouth, you young fool. You don't know what you're talking about.

MAX. I do know, Mr. Davids. And I'm going to let other people know. I'm not going to be a pauper always. Don't you worry about that. My day is coming, and my first job will be to expose you.

DAVIDS. [*laughing loud and harshly.*] See here, you petty whimperer, I've had many such a threat before —yes, from quite grown-up people. My life's not been spotlessly clean, but any man can run it over with a rule. Women have suffered for me, but, by George, I don't owe any of 'em a halfpenny. As you grow older you'll find out that you can wrong your fellow-creatures and be positively applauded if you open your purse wide enough afterwards. But you've got to have the money in your pocket before you sin. Paupers mustn't break the laws either of God or man. [*To* HILARY.] I'm not concerned with the justice or injustice of the theory, but with the facts.

HILARY. Ah, yes, the old story. Take life as you find it, not as you know you ought to lead it. I don't dislike you, Davids, but you are conspicuously a curse to your fellow-creatures.

DAVIDS. Yes, you're a pretty fine theorist, aren't you? Champagne and chicken [*pointing to the table*] are a curse, aren't they? If I bought a picture from you, that would

be a curse, wouldn't it? I reckon this young man is a little more material.

MAX. Damn your food!

DAVIDS. [*mockingly.*] "Give us this day our daily bread."

MAX. [*grabbing champagne bottle by the neck, but not lifting it.*] Get out of this or I'll kill you.

HILARY. Max, drop that.

MAX *lets go of the bottle.*

DAVIDS. Ah, anything but that. Let him drink to his own destruction when I'm gone. [*Picking up his hat.*] Look here, young man. [*Addressing* MAX *and pressing on him till he retreats to the writing-desk. Here* MAX *stands with his back to the desk and his hands resting on it—the right hand in close proximity to the revolver.*] I've got rid of you, and I don't want to see you again. I warn you that if you are a nuisance to me I'll break you. I've had the handling of little hounds of your sort before, and I know how to set about 'em. [*Turns from* MAX *to* HILARY *and stands between table and settee.*] I'm sorry our acquaintance has come to such an abrupt ending, but you're a bad hand at choosing relations.

MAX *fires from the desk into* DAVID'S *back.* HILARY *is sitting on chair on left of table C.*

DAVIDS. [*his jaw dropping.*] My God! You've hit me.

DAVIDS *drops to the floor where he stands and remains hunched up by the table. Both* MAX *and* HILARY *hurry to him and lift him. They drop him as if frightened.*

HILARY. He's dead!

MAX. Dead! Listen to his heart. [HILARY *bends over the body.*] There is some one coming. They've heard the shot. Hil! Hil! I shall be hanged.

HILARY. You! You! . . . Max, give me the revolver. [MAX *hands it over.*] Help me! Help me to lie.

Half collapses into chair behind table C. PEEL *bursts into the room.* MAX *shrinks down settee to extreme end.*

PEEL. Mister Cutts! Mister Cutts! Oh! [*Seeing body.*]

JIM *and* WILL *hurry in anxiously.*

JIM. Good God! Hilary! What's happened?

HILARY. I shot him, Jim. I've killed him. It was a way out!

CURTAIN

ACT III

The scene is the same as in Acts I. and II. The disposition of the furniture is the same, but there are changes apparent in the room such as would naturally be expected to occur in the course of some months. It is now summer. A gaily coloured screen is in front of the fireplace where a fire had been burning brightly in the first two Acts. There are a few flowers in a vase on the mantel-shelf. A great number of newspapers are piled about the room. Carelessly pinned up over the sideboard, R. of door C., is an evening newspaper's contents bill, reading "TRIAL OF HILARY CUTTS : VERDICT". *When the curtain rises* JIM BENZIGER *is seen seated in easy-chair by fireplace, down L., reading a newspaper.* WILL GRAIN *is at desk R., writing.* PEEL *stands by chair above table C., and is reading aloud from a newspaper. As usual, when he reads, his black-rimmed spectacles are pushed up on his forehead and the paper is held close to his eyes.*

PEEL. [*reading.*] "Something concerning the personality of Herbert Burridge, the man entrusted with to-morrow's execution, cannot fail to be of interest to our readers. [JIM *and* WILL *make gestures of impatience.*] He is by profession a hairdresser and umbrella repairer, and, when not in the receipt of His Majesty's commands, resides at Chorley. Workmen and their wives and children are to be seen entering and leaving his establishment day after day, and their countenances betray no feelings of dread at their so doing. They don't approach

the shop with fear and tremor, neither do they leave it as though released from a dungeon."

WILL. Ah, burn the thing, Peel.

JIM. No, no. Go on, Peel. That sort of journalism is really indirectly criminal. Criminology entrances me.

PEEL. "Burridge is a most humane man of retiring disposition, and as customers lie at his mercy when he has a razor in hand, they do so unflinchingly." It's nice to think that poor Mr. Cutts will be handled sympathetically at the end, isn't it?

JIM. Most consoling, Peel. Any more of it?

PEEL. [*scrutinizing paper.*] One and a half columns, including the portrait.

JIM. Good gracious. [*Takes paper from* PEEL.] Listen to this, Will. "Burridge goes to perform an execution the same as if he were going to feed his chickens or cut a person's hair. He is always perfectly calm, and his razor, when shaving, does not betray any signs of nervousness. His appetite is always the same. He eats well, but he never changes his diet before going to or after returning from an execution. He does not eat large beefsteaks, potatoes with thick gravy, nor strong drinks. He takes no drink at all, and the food he eats is always simple and wholesome. In short, although a hangman, he is no different from other men."

PELL. Well, there now. I wonder, by the way, how one becomes a hangman.

WILL. The man who wrote that rot ought to be hanged himself.

JIM. The man who wrote that rot ought to be delivered into my hands. I should like to lodge and board him for some time, so that I could leisurely analyse him. He is a pervert, of course.

WILL. Probably a woman.

JIM. No. Sexless, I should imagine. It should be made to talk and write constantly. It should be allowed

to develop its ego. There is a certain type of journalist whose depths of depravity have never been sounded. For the sake of discovering his possibilities, a specimen should be trapped and diplomatically nursed. It should not take long to discover the limitations of his viciousness.

WILL. What good would that do?

JIM. Good? Good? I don't want to do good. Why will you insist on mistaking all your intelligent friends for members of the Fabian Society?

WILL. [*sticking down an envelope and handing letter to* PEEL.] Post that for me at once, will you, Peel?

PEEL. [*who has been standing with his hand on the handle of the door C., but listening most interestedly to the conversation.*] Certainly, sir.

Exit PEEL, *C.*

WILL. Ah've written a last line to Hilary.

JIM. What, precisely, did you say?

WILL. [*shamefacedly.*] Ah told him the latest news and Ah told him—well—just all that a chum could say to a chum that's got to swing. The real truth of that crime has got to be told to the world when he's dead. Ah'm not going to have him remembered as a common felon.

JIM. The real truth? Are you sure you know the real truth?

Enter MAXIMILIAN CUTTS, *C. He presents a considerably improved appearance. He carries his head better, his cheeks are fatter, and his voice has a confident ring. He wears the same suit, but carries a stick and is smoking a cigarette. On his head is a new straw hat with a black band. He enters briskly, throws down hat and stick, and seats himself in chair above table C.*

MAX. Good evening, Mr. Benziger. Good evening, Mr. Grain. Had dinner?

JIM. No.

WILL. No.

MAX. Are you going to grub out?

JIM. Hardly.

WILL. [*going up to him.*] Do you feel like "grubbing out" as you call it?

MAX. I feel hungry. I suppose I oughtn't to, but I do.

WILL. You can feel as hungry as you like, and eat what you like and do what you like, but let me tell you that your beastly flippancy is not particularly pleasant to your brother's friends this evening.

MAX. I don't admit being flippant. I'm rational. That's all.

WILL. [*blazing with rage.*] Rational! Do you call your conduct since your brother's conviction rational? You're the most unnatural, self-centred little beast Ah've ever come across. For two pins Ah'd thrash the life out of you.

MAX. And my answer is that you are a silly, sickly sentimentalist. You belong to the order of fools who wear black clothes as a token of mourning and pile immortelles on the coffin of a statesman who dies of drink.

JIM. Why shouldn't he die of drink?

MAX. No reason whatever. Quite a philosophic death, but regarded by your inconsistent immortelle-scatterer as entirely loathsome. [*Turning to* GRAIN.] You seem to look upon me as an unnatural beast because I do not openly grieve over my brother's approaching execution. Let me tell you, I welcome my brother's death, though I deplore the manner of it. But am I responsible for the manner of it?

WILL. You've got me there. Ah put the idea into his head.

MAX. So you did, but you were afraid to say so in the witness-box.

WILL. It would have ruined me. And it wasn't necessary.

MAX. Quite so. It was unnecessary. Hilary confessed all, told his own story, and I—and I alone—had to swear that he fired the shot with intent to kill.

JIM. How in God's name you did it, I don't know. I've seen some remarkably nonchalant murderers under trial, but I never expected to see a man swear away his brother's life with such—after-dinner geniality.

MAX. How would you have had me behave? Was I to shiver, look pale, droop my eyelids to satisfy a fatuous public notion of decency? Decency! Pah!

JIM. [*thoughtfully.*] Decency — decency. A good name for a play.

MAX. I behaved as I felt. And I felt glad. Hilary was to die, and he deliberately chose to die that way. I and my unfortunate brothers and sisters were on the edge of happiness. Only a hypocrite would have affected concern. Besides, there was plenty of comedy for me in that final scene. When the judge said to Hilary, "May the Lord have mercy on your soul," the memory came back to me of old Hil in a comic costume riding a donkey at our village sports. Just as the chaplain said "Amen," I recalled how the donkey bucked and threw old Hil off. He must have been thinking of something equally funny, because his eye caught mine and he laughed outright. I shall never forget his Lordship's shocked face.

JIM. That was certainly amusing. His Lordship has such a reputation as a humorist, too. But still, he was not present at the village sports, I take it.

MAX. Yes, he was, in the abstract. So were you, and so was Grain. You all roared when Hil fell off the donkey, and you all mope at the idea of the six-foot drop. Can't death be comic?

WILL. Look here, young man, Ah'm sick of you and your blasphemous talk. Your brother was my friend and Ah—damn you!

Snatches up his hat and exit C.

MAX. H'm, I'm sorry I offended him. My views are eccentric, I suppose. He's not accustomed to that sort of thing in the House of Commons. One must have phlegm nowadays. You've got it.

JIM. I'm a little in advance of my time, perhaps. I don't ruffle when I'm bored. I simply feel faint.

MAX. I don't bore you. I know I don't. I can feel you studying me. I have always felt it.

JIM. What makes you think that death can be comic?

MAX. I never thought it until this particular instance arose. But I must confess that it has amused me in fiction. I laughed at the conclusion of "A Tale of Two Cities". Sydney Carton on the scaffold is to my mind an irresistibly comic figure. I admire his heroism, mind you, but as one of the spectators in the know, I chuckle over the absurdity of his execution.

JIM. Why does your brother's fate remind you of Sydney Carton?

MAX. [*a little confused.*] Oh—well—Hilary, after all, is sacrificing himself for others. He did not want to kill this man Davids.

JIM. And because he killed Davids for impersonal motives, and got himself condemned to death for it, you regard to-morrow's execution as comic.

MAX. Certainly; because the law and the world are being fooled. You must see the humorous side of it. Don't tell me you agree with Mr. Grain. I am bitterly sorry that Hilary is to die because he's my brother. But I am heartily glad that by means of his execution my other brothers and sisters whom I love equally well are to be rescued from the direst misery.

JIM. [*slowly.*] I don't see your point. I entirely fail to see the comedy of this death. When I saw Hilary in prison, I asked him how he regarded the prospect. I never lose an opportunity, I may mention, of improving my psychological knowledge. Hilary said—and mind you his

sense of humour is as keen as yours—that, reviewing life as he had experienced it, its end was its most wholesome feature. Wholesome, that was the word he used. Life is comic, I grant. But death is only wholesome.

MAX. [*rising.*] Well, you won't be convinced, I can see, so it's no use talking about it. By the way, there is something I had forgotten to mention. I hope you won't think I have taken a liberty. A fr— an acquaintance of mine is calling this evening—on business. I know I ought to have asked your permission. But you have been good enough to let me live here since the police allowed you to return to the flat, and I thought I might ask him to come in.

JIM. Who is he ?

MAX. He's a money-lender.

JIM. Hilary told me that you could not anticipate.

MAX. This man is letting me have a small sum at his own risk.

JIM. Can't you wait for your money ?

MAX. I'm afraid I can't. We shan't be able to touch the governor's money for some time, and this fellow is obliging me.

JIM. How much are you borrowing ?

MAX. Fifty pounds.

JIM. What sort of interest is he charging ?

MAX. It's rather heavy, but I want the money to-night. He said if I waited till to-morrow, till after Hilary was dead, he would let me have it for a mere 15 per cent or so.

JIM. Why must you have the money to-night ?

MAX. You know that girl—the girl I got sacked for ?

JIM. Yes.

MAX. Davids was going to look after her, but when he was killed she had to get another job. She's found me out, and she swears she'll go to a solicitor if I don't pay her something substantial to-night. I must do it. It would

spoil all my life if that beastly business were to come out just as I came into the money.

JIM. Why must she have it to-night?

MAX. She's got a job as a cashier. She's been robbing the till. If she doesn't put it back to-night, she'll be caught. Oh, I do hope you won't mind. I have been so worried about it.

JIM. Why must he come here? Why not deal with him at his office?

MAX. I suppose I must tell you. He's a queer, morbid sort of chap. It seems he's very keen on murder trials, and all sorts of criminal cases. He told me he was in court all through Hilary's trial. He recognised my name and the address, and pressed me to let him see the room where the murder took place. I tried to put him off, but at last he made it a condition to his lending the money before Hilary's death. I had to give in. You'll let him come in, won't you?

JIM. For that wretched girl's sake, I will.

MAX. Thanks so much. You're awfully good to me.

JIM. Not at all. Sit down. [*Indicating settee on R.*] Let us resume that very interesting discussion. What makes you think that death can be comic?

MAX. Well, really, aren't you tired of the subject? The thing's plain enough to me.

JIM. That is why I want you to expound. I suppose I'm very dense this evening. But the suggestion tickles me. Let me explain my difficulty by means of a parallel example. If, when I was a boy at school, I indulged in some lawless escapade and got off scot-free, certainly I was amused. And if another boy, perfectly innocent, were punished for my misdemeanour, I agree that I laughed immoderately.

MAX. Well, there you are!

JIM. [*very piercingly.*] How do you mean—"There you are?"

MAX. [*nervously.*] Aren't the cases similar? You said yourself that it was a parallel example.

JIM. *I* said so. Do you say so?

MAX. Well, in one way, of course.

JIM. Think now. Why did I laugh? I laughed because another boy was being punished for my sin. Do you laugh because Hilary is being punished for some one else's sin?

MAX. I don't laugh at all. I say there is comedy in Hilary's fate because it is the direct result of a crime which he never wanted to commit.

JIM. I don't understand. Your evidence at the trial was to the effect that he did want to kill Davids and did it in cold blood.

MAX. Yes, I know, but—

JIM. But what?

MAX. He would have killed anybody to get—

JIM. To get himself killed? I don't believe it. Neither did the jury, I'll swear. Hilary was sentenced to death because your evidence made it plain that he killed Davids to avenge your ill-treatment.

MAX. [*by now very frightened.*] Well?

JIM. Well, is that comic? Is it comic that your brother should hang because he championed you in your misery? . . You don't answer. It is not comic. No human being could see comedy in that sort of situation. Therefore, it is not the true state of affairs. You must have perjured yourself in the witness-box, or there would be nothing for you to laugh at.

MAX. I told the truth. You know that Mr. Grain put the idea into his head of getting hanged for murdering some public scourge.

JIM. Yes, yes. I know the story. I know what Grain said. But Hilary's subsequent action proves that he did not take his advice. Having murdered Davids, why didn't he blow his own brains out, instead of going through the horrors of a trial and execution?

MAX. I daresay he would have done if he'd thought of it.

JIM. I don't think he had time to think of it. Davids did not attack him, I suppose?

MAX. No.

JIM. Did Davids attack you?

MAX. No.

JIM. Then, Hilary, if he shot Davids at all—

MAX. Of course he shot him.

JIM. Well, you know, of course. You are the only one who does know the facts. You are, to use your own phrase in connection with Sydney Carton's execution, "one of the spectators in the know." Was there a third witness present when Davids was shot?

MAX. [*intensely scared at the suggestion.*] Good Heavens, no!

JIM. Then you shot him, you little rat. That's what you find so comic. When the judge prayed God to have mercy on Hilary's innocent soul, your sense of humour was tickled, little rat. I'm not surprised [*grabbing him by the coat-collar and shaking him*], little rat.

MAX. Let me go. You're mad. I didn't kill him. I swear I didn't kill him.

JIM. Listen, little rat. It's your word against his. If Hilary accuses you, you're under as great a suspicion as he.

MAX. Hilary never said that. He didn't. [*Getting hysterical.*] He didn't. He promised he—

JIM. [*sharply.*] Promised he—what?

MAX. [*realising that he has committed himself.*] Oh, you devil! [*Bursts into hysterical tears.*]

JIM. You flatter me.

MAX. You're not going to tell this story. You're not going to—you shan't! Hilary has confessed. He'll hang to-morrow. You can't hang two men for one crime. Can you? Can you? You can't. I swear

you can't. For God's sake, don't start the story. It'll ruin me. It won't do any good. You don't want me hanged, do you? I never did it. I swear I never did it. Hilary shot him. But it might look bad for me if you were to tell. You won't tell, will you? Oh, say you won't tell. Look here. You're not rich. I shall be. You can have—

JIM *knocks him down with a blow across the mouth.*

JIM. Get up, little rat. Now listen to me for a few moments. I suspected that you were the real murderer when I burst into the room a few moments after Davids was shot. I suspected from your manner then and your manner since. Hilary's manner convinced me that the truth was not told at the trial. When I interviewed him in prison, I put my suspicions as plainly as possible in the presence of the warders. Hilary did not deny, nor did he affirm, but he begged me to let things go. "I've got to die," he said, "and you'll be a bad friend if you do anything to prevent it." So you're safe, little rat. I've given my word that I will not hinder your brother's execution. Oh, you're safe enough.

MAX. [*after a pause.*] I suppose I've got to clear out of here.

JIM. Certainly not. I want you a little longer. You were quite right when you said I was studying you. I am. And I want to keep you under the microscope for a few hours more at any rate.

Enter WILL GRAIN, *C.* MAX *slinks into his bedroom, formerly* HILARY'S, *off L.*

JIM. What's brought you back, Will?

WILL. Jim, Ah couldn't sit by myself. Ah couldn't bear to be alone and just keep thinking and thinking of poor old Hil in his cell. It chokes me. Ah feel as bad as he must feel.

JIM. I don't think you understand Hilary, much as you love him. Hilary, I am sure, is not now grieving

over his approaching demise. He is just wondering whether his death will do his relations any good. I have never come across a man so genuine in his contempt for mere existence.

WILL. You're wrong, Jim. A man can't sit overnight and wait for the hangman without sweating with fear. It's such a loathsome death. There never has been a murder so cruel as the sentence of a British judge.

JIM. I suppose you would abolish capital punishment.

WILL. No, far from it. But Ah'd only sentence a murderer to be hanged after a delay of a fortnight, if it were proved that the murderer had treated his victim in the same way. If a man locked up his wife, told her that at the end of a fortnight he'd cut her throat, and carried out his threat at the appointed time, then he'd deserve to be hanged after the manner of the British judicial system, but only then. Murderers rarely torture their victims. They simply kill them. Our laws both torture and kill.

Enter PEEL, *C. He carefully closes the door behind him and comes down C., then speaking in a very confidential manner.*

PEEL. A person has called to see Mr. Maximilian Cutts. Should he be admitted, sir?

JIM. What's his name?

PEEL. [*consulting visiting-card.*] Mr. Stuart Campbell.

JIM. A Scotsman?

PEEL. Perhaps, sir. He looks to me, sir, like one of those gentlemen that Mr. Hilary always wanted to examine through the keyhole first.

JIM. I think I know who he is. A money-lender, Will. The young fool made an appointment with him here to-night.

WILL. Durned impudence.

JIM. I gave him permission. Show him in, Peel.

PEEL. [*resignedly.*] If you approve, sir.

Exit PEEL, *C.*

WILL. I suppose they want the room to themselves.

JIM. Let 'em want. I shan't allow it.

Enter PEEL, *C.*

PEEL. [*announcing.*] Mr. Stuart Campbell.

Enter MR. STUART CAMPBELL, *C. He is a slim man of medium height and pronouncedly Hebraic features. He wears a grey bowler hat and carries a small bag.*

CAMPBELL. Good evening, gentlemen.

JIM. [*who is sitting in chair by fire, reading.*] Good evening.

WILL. [*who is seated on settee.*] Good evening.

CAMPBELL. Is Mr. C. in?

Exit PEEL, *C.*

JIM. Mr. — who?

CAMPBELL. Mr. C. Mr. M. C. Mr. Maximilian Cutts. We always call gents by their initials in my profession. There's a feeling that when you're doing a little friendly business it's more respectful. I don't know how it strikes you.

MR. CAMPBELL *speaks softly and sibilantly.*

JIM *rises and goes to bedroom door, L.*

JIM. Cutts, your acquaintance has arrived.

Returns to seat.

MAX *enters nervously from L.*

MAX. [*looking out of the corner of his eye at* JIM *and* WILL.] Good evening, Mr. Campbell. These are my friends, Mr. Benziger and Mr. Grain. [CAMPBELL *bows to these gentlemen's backs.*] I see you are well up to time.

CAMPBELL. Yes, Mr. C. I always keep my watch five minutes fast in case I should disappoint a customer. Gents who require temporary financial assistance like prompt dealing. They get it from some firms, not from all. But you know the right turning off Piccadilly, don't you, Mr. C.? Well, let's get to business. Is this the room where the murder was committed?

WILL *snorts indignantly, but* JIM *only pricks up his ears and listens interestedly.*

MAX. [*wretchedly.*] Yes, Mr. Campbell, it was here. Have you brought the—er—agreement?

CAMPBELL. Both the agreement and the money, Mr. C. Can you see the bloodstains?

MAX. Do take a seat, Mr. Campbell.

CAMPBELL. Certainly, Mr. C. [*Sitting on chair above table, C.*] Perhaps you are right. Business first and pleasure afterwards. Well, well. There's the agreement, Mr. C. [*Producing paper from bag.*] Read it over, and satisfy yourself that it's quite O.K., Mr. C.

MAX *takes paper and looks through it, while* MR. CAMPBELL *surveys the room with beady eyes.*

CAMPBELL. It don't look murderish, this room. At the trial I never got the opinion it was a room like this. But there you are. Realism is always disappointing. Yes, Mr. C. [*Answering a muttered query from* MAX.] That's the ordinary rate of interest in these cases.

MAX. How much are the expenses?

CAMPBELL. The enquiry fee, Mr. C., in your case, will be one guinea and a half, sixpence for the agreement, ten shillings and ninepence for my travelling expenses, and two pounds ten shillings the precautionary insurance. [MAX *gapes at him, but* CAMPBELL'S *eyes wander round the room again.*] Was there a struggle?

MAX. What on earth is the precautionary insurance?

CAMPBELL. Well, Mr. C., for two pounds ten I can insure your life for fifty pounds for a year, and that would save any unpleasantness with your executors in case of your death. It's always done. My clients prefer it.

MAX. But the agreement is for seventy pounds. I only wanted fifty pounds for a year.

CAMPBELL. That amount, Mr. C., includes the interest.

MAX. Forty per cent!

CAMPBELL. I assure you, Mr. C., it's necessary. We often lose everything we lend.

MAX. Then if I sign this, I agree to pay you seventy pounds at the end of a year?

CAMPBELL. That is so, Mr. C.

MAX. And how much do I get?

CAMPBELL. Fifty pounds, less expenses, Mr. C.; to be exact, forty-five pounds seven shillings and threepence.

MAX. But it's preposterous.

CAMPBELL. I hope you haven't wasted my time, Mr. C.

MAX. Give it to me. I'll sign it.

He takes the agreement, crosses to writing-desk and signs it, returning it to MR. CAMPBELL.

CAMPBELL. Thank you, Mr. C. [*Producing bank-notes and gold.*] Have you got change of half-a-sovereign?

MAX. No. Haven't you?

CAMPBELL. I'm afraid not, Mr. C.

MAX. [*after glancing hesitatingly at* JIM *and* WILL.] I'll run across to the Post Office and get it.

Picks up his hat and exit C.

Some seconds' pause. CAMPBELL *peers about the room, stares at the backs of* JIM *and* WILL, *and then, suddenly, in heavily punctuated syllables, asks a question.*

CAMPBELL. Where did the body drop?

WILL *jumps up as if to expostulate with* CAMPBELL, *but a sign from* JIM *restrains him. A heavy silence again follows.*

CAMPBELL. Do either of you gents know the time of the execution?

JIM. Mr. Cutts will tell you all you wish to know when he returns.

Again a silence. The telephone bell rings. JIM *rises leisurely and goes to it.*

JIM. Yes? This is Mr. Benziger. No. Mr. Cutts is out. He will be back in a moment if you care to hang

on. Who are you? Darragh and Davis? Oh, yes, I know. Mr. Hilary Cutts' solicitors. What? Good what? Good news? Home Secretary interfered. Mr. Cutts' sentence commuted. Good God, Will. [*Turning to* GRAIN.] Hilary's not to hang. It's penal servitude for life. [*Back to telephone.*] What? Are you sure? You've just had the message. Right, right, right! I'll tell him.

Puts down telephone receiver.

WILL. Jim, Jim, Ah hoped for it, but Ah never dared say so. Thank God! Thank God! And he won't be in long if Ah can do anything in Parliament. Ah'll have him out before he knows he's in. Ah'll—

Enter MAX, *C. He puts down his hat, looks curiously at* WILL, *and comes down to the table.* JIM *is again down L., and is sitting in his chair with his head in his hands.* WILL, *glowing with relief, is standing R. of table. When* MAX *enters* WILL *drops down R. below settee.*

MAX. Here is the money. [CAMPBELL, *who has been sitting half stupefied by the news, looks up reproachfully at* MAX *and gathers up his notes and gold.*] What are you doing that for?

CAMPBELL. H'm, Mr. C., I think it's safer in my pocket.

MAX. [*slightly alarmed.*] What? Aren't you going to lend me the money? Have they been trying to put you off?

Turning angrily to WILL *and* JIM.

CAMPBELL. Oh, no, Mr. C. But information has come to hand showing the security to be bad. Consequently we can't do business.

MAX. What do you mean? I must have it, I tell you. You promised—

CAMPBELL. Mr. C., your friends have some news for you.

MAX. News! What news?

JIM. [*looking up.*] A message has just come through on the telephone from Hilary's solicitors.

MAX. Yes?

JIM. The Home Secretary has commuted Hilary's sentence into penal servitude for life.

MAX. [*muttering at first.*] Commuted! Penal servitude! Not hanged! It's a lie! You devils, it's a lie!

WILL. It's the truth, and thank God for it!

MAX. The truth! Hilary's not to die! Hilary's not to die! [*He laughs mirthlessly.*] It's absurd. He was sentenced. The jury found him guilty. Twelve men found him guilty in twelve minutes. Twelve in twelve. No recommendation to mercy. "To be hanged by the neck till you are dead." The judge said so. Yes, he'll be dead to-morrow. [*Suddenly shouting.*] What do you mean by lying to me?

JIM. [*raising his head.*] Listen!

Through the open window is heard the shout of a newsboy.

"Hilary Cutts Reprieved—Home Secretary's Decision —Hilary Cutts Reprieved."

MAX *stands with dropped jaw and stupefied limbs.*

CAMPBELL. [*rising from table, shutting his bag and picking up his hat.*] I'm sure this will be a great relief for you, Mr. C., although I have to disappoint you about the money. In the circumstances, if it's only to show my sympathy, that is to say, my gratification, I'll waive the little matter of expenses. Good day, Mr. C. Good day, Mr. B. Good day, Mr. G.

Exit CAMPBELL, *C.*

MAX. [*who has watched* CAMPBELL'S *departure as if the figure of the man fascinated him.*] I don't get the money! [*Suddenly shouting again.*] Why is he reprieved?

JIM. Buy the evening paper.

MAX. It's a conspiracy. It's a damnable conspiracy.

There's something at the bottom of this. Somebody wants to stop us getting that money. Hilary's been trapped. We've got to go on—to go on going down. We can all go to the devil again. Oh, my God!

PEEL *suddenly bursts into the room waving an evening newspaper triumphantly.*

PEEL. [*breathlessly.*] Mr. Benziger! Mr. Grain! He's reprieved. He's—

Stops short at the sight of MAX.

MAX. [*standing just above table C., an awful picture of despair.*] What am I going to do? What am I going to do? What are we all going to do?

JIM *makes a noise in his throat something like a laugh.*

CURTAIN

THE TRAGEDY OF POMPEY THE GREAT

JOHN MASEFIELD

PLAYS by JOHN MASEFIELD

THE CAMPDEN WONDER.

Produced at the Court Theatre, London, by the Vedrenne-Barker management, January 1907.

MRS. HARRISON.

THE TRAGEDY OF NAN.

Produced by the Pioneers at the New Royalty Theatre, London, under the direction of Granville Barker, May 1908. (Published with the two foregoing plays by Grant Richards, 1909.)

THE TRAGEDY OF POMPEY THE GREAT.

(Published by Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd., 1910; revised edition, 1914.)

PHILIP THE KING.

(Published by W. Heinemann, 1914.)

THE FAITHFUL.

(Same publisher, 1915.)

GOOD FRIDAY, and THE LOCKED CHEST and THE SWEEPS OF NINETY-EIGHT.

(Published by the author, 1916, subsequently by W. Heinemann, 1917–18.)

MELLONEY HOLTSPUR.

(Published by W. Heinemann, 1922.)

A KING'S DAUGHTER.

Produced by the Hill Players at the Oxford Playhouse, May 1923. (Same publisher, 1923.)

POMPEY THE GREAT

was produced by the Stage Society at the Aldwych Theatre, London, on December 4, 1910, under the direction of Mr. Harcourt Williams, with the following cast (the characters being arranged in order of their appearance) :—

ANTISTIA	Adeline Bourne.
PHILIP	Jules Shaw.
CORNELIA	Jean Sterling.
JULIA	Isabel Ohmead.
Q. CAECILIUS METELLUS PIUS SCIPIO	Laurence Hanray.
CNEIUS POMPEIUS MAGNUS	Herbert Grimwood.
CNEIUS POMPEIUS THEOPHANES	Tripp Edgar.
MARCUS PORCIUS CATO	A. S. Homewood.
A Gaulish Lancer	H. Laurence Leyton.
LUCIUS DOMITIUS AHENOBARBUS	Grendon Bentley.
PUBLIUS LENTULUS SPINTHER	Ralph Hutton.
Orderly	E. Cresfan.
COTTA, a Centurion	Guy Rathbone.
MARCUS ACILIUS GLABRIO	Ewan Brook.
LUCIUS LUCCEIUS	Alfred A. Harris.
2nd Centurion	Rathmell Wilson.
3rd Centurion	Charles Bishop.
4th Centurion	Tom Ronald.
Chantyman	Rathmell Wilson.
1st Sailor	Charles Bishop.
2nd Sailor	Tom Ronald.
A Mate	H. Laurence Leyton.
A Ship-Captain	Edmund Gurney.
A Ship-Boy	Philip Tonge.
ACHILLAS EGYPTIAN	Alfred A. Harris.
LUCIUS SEPTIMIUS	E. Cresfan.

Centurions, Sentries, Soldiers, Trumpeters, Sailors.

All applications for permission to perform this play, whether for amateur or professional production, must be made to the COLLECTION BUREAU, THE INCORPORATED SOCIETY OF AUTHORS, 11 Gower Street, London, W.C.1.

THE TRAGEDY OF POMPEY THE GREAT

ACT I

A room in POMPEY'S *house near Rome. Walls hung with draperies of a dark blue. Doors curtained. Balcony, open, showing distant lights. A gong and mallet. Wine, glasses, etc. Papers in a casket. Lamps. Horns without as troops pass.* ANTISTIA *alone, lighting lamps with a taper.*

ANTISTIA. [*looking towards the window.*] More soldiers. Blow your horns. Spread your colours, ensign. Your colours'll be dust the sooner. Your breath will be in the wind, a little noise in the night. That's what you come to, soldiers. Dust, and a noise in the trees. Dust, and the window rattling. No more flags and horns then. [*Lighting the last lamp.*] I wish I knew the rights of it. [*Settling books on table.*] I wish Philip would come.

A VOICE. [*without, in the balcony.*] Pompey.

ANTISTIA. What was that?

THE VOICE. Pompey.

ANTISTIA. [*frightened.*] Who calls Pompey?

THE VOICE. Not so loud. Not so loud, Pompey.

ANTISTIA. What is it? What d'you want with Pompey?

THE VOICE. Philip must tell Pompey at once.

ANTISTIA. What must he tell him?

THE VOICE. To stamp his foot at once.

ANTISTIA. To stamp his foot at once?

THE VOICE. [*amid laughter.*] Stamp your foot, Pompey. Aha! Ha! Pompey.

ANTISTIA. [*going to the window.*] What's this? Who are you?

THE VOICE. [*going.*] Aha! Pompey. Stamp your feet, Pompey.

ANTISTIA. [*going to a door R. scared.*] Philip, Philip.

PHILIP. [*putting down tray.*] What's the matter? What's happened?

ANTISTIA. There was a voice. A voice. Something at the window. Jeering Pompey.

PHILIP. [*opening window.*] Who is there? There's no one there now. Was it a man?

ANTISTIA. There was no one. It had a man's voice. It spoke. It laughed.

PHILIP. It's gone. It's gone, my dear. Don't. Don't. It's gone.

ANTISTIA. They say that the dead come back, to cry in the night [*pause*] whenever bad times are coming. Dead men's souls, licking blood in the night, whenever Rome's in danger.

PHILIP. Hush. Hush. Don't say such things. It gives them life. What was it saying?

THE VOICE. Stamp your foot, Pompey. Stamp your foot, Pompey.

ANTISTIA. Ah!

PHILIP. [*exorcising at window, with things from tray.*] Wine for blood. [*Pours wine.*] Bread for flesh. [*Breaks bread.*] Salt for life. [*Flings salt.*] A cloak of blue on Rome. A net of gold over this house. To the desert. To the night without stars. To the wastes of the sea. To the two-forked flame. [*Returning heavily.*] God save my dear master, Pompey, I fear there's trouble coming.

ANTISTIA. [*hysterically.*] Ah! Ah!

PHILIP. [*pouring water.*] Drink this. Drink this. I'll fetch another glass.

ANTISTIA. [*hysterically.*] Not off that tray. Not off that tray.

PHILIP. There. There. God save us! Why, Antistia, they've no power.

ANTISTIA. I see the marching of armies, that is what the trumpets mean. War. Civil War. Pompey and Cæsar, like eagles struggling.

PHILIP. No. No. Don't say that. You bring things to pass.

ANTISTIA. What else could it mean? What did it mean?

PHILIP. [*distractedly.*] I don't rightly know what it said.

ANTISTIA. About stamping? About Pompey stamping?

PHILIP. Pompey said it in the Senate yesterday. Reports came in. There was a panic. The Senators were at their wits' ends. News came that Cæsar was marching on Rome. They asked Pompey if he had an army, if he could defend them.

ANTISTIA. Is Cæsar coming?

PHILIP. It was one of these rumours.

ANTISTIA. What did Pompey say?

PHILIP. He said if he stamped his foot, soldiers would spring up all over Italy, armies of soldiers, to drive Cæsar back into Gaul.

ANTISTIA. And now he must stamp his foot. Cæsar's on the road with his army.

PHILIP. It's time for the house to shake when the door-posts quarrel. [*Pausing at distant tumult.*]

ANTISTIA. They're proud ones, to set the world on fire so as one of them may warm his hands.

PHILIP. Pompey's only defending the State.

ANTISTIA. [*to Cæsar's bust.*] Make the deserts quags

of blood, Cæsar. Go on in your pride, till the Kings of the world sweep your stables. You'll come to be a dumb thing, tied in a sheet, carried out foot-foremost. You won't know whether it's tar or spice they'll smear you with, to make you burn. And when you're dust, you'll fill a little pot, Cæsar, a little metal pot on a shelf. Go pray, man. The primrose the rabbit eats will be a prouder thing than Cæsar that day.

PHILIP. [*at bust.*] He thinks he's a great one, Cæsar does, now that he's conquered Gaul. What are the Gauls? The Gauls are naked heathen, with copper swords like the savages. Why, Cæsar would never have been anybody if Pompey hadn't backed him.

ANTISTIA. That's reason enough for him to fight Pompey now.

PHILIP. Pompey made him what he is. Pompey got him his place in Gaul. He was no one before that. [*Pause.*] And now he hopes to put Pompey down. So he can rule Rome instead. Put my master Pompey down.

ANTISTIA. I suppose Cæsar couldn't beat Pompey, Philip?

PHILIP. Antistia. [*Solemnly.*] Don't you talk like that, Antistia. I believe wherever Pompey goes, there goes a god in front of him. Like fire. It's that makes him what he is. Oh, my dear beloved master. I'm that drove mad, I can't hardly talk of it. That he should have a civil war with Cæsar. And him only newly married.

ANTISTIA. It was a civil war that first made Pompey famous, Philip.

PHILIP. He was with Sulla, against Marius, in the civil wars then. And ever since then he's gone on, just as though a god went before him, brushing a road for him. You would see nothing but dangers all round, and Pompey would ride up. And [*he blows in his hand*] puff. They'd fade. They'd go. [*Pause.*] I've seen all Rome out on the roofs to see my master, Pompey. Triumph? There

were horns blowing, you couldn't hear, and forty kings marching barefoot in the streets. I've seen him grow to be the greatest man in the world.

ANTISTIA. Eh? The greatest man in the world. And all through being with Sulla in the civil war. Supposing he were not great, Philip. Only a big clay statue. A statue propped up by sticks. A clay thing, gilded. Rats gnawing at it. The wind shaking it. The sun cracking it. [*Pause.*] And dead men, Philip, dead men underneath it in the dust, fumbling at it to bring it down.

PHILIP. Antistia.

ANTISTIA. Time brings all about, they say. You spoke of Sulla, Philip. I was a little girl then, when Marius and Sulla fought. My father was a centurion under Marius. I never told you that. What do you know of me, Philip, except that I'm to marry you? I was in the street outside our house, and some men came across the road. They patted my head and asked if my father was upstairs. I said yes, Philip. And they went in and brought him out. Out to the door in the sun. Some boys gathered to watch. I ran up to him, Philip, to show him my doll. And one of the men said, "We'll give you Marius." He was behind my father. He swung his arm right back like this, to give his sword a sweep. He knocked my dada down with a great hack on the neck, and they all stabbed him as he fell. One of the men said, "There's your dada, little girl; run and tell mother." And then one of the boys knelt down and stole his sandals, and another snatched my doll away. Time brings all about, Philip. All the lives spilt then by Pompey and Sulla are coming out of the night. Out of Spain. Out of Rome. Out of Asia. Souls have power, Philip, even in the darkness, when the time comes.

PHILIP. [*awed.*] What time?

ANTISTIA. Pompey's time. There. There. It's beginning. [*Noise of a tumult. The horns of Soldiers.*] They

begin like that, Philip. They're very proud. For things that go from the prison of a womb to the prison under the grass, they're very proud. When they march to the trumpet, they forget that women bore them. Women bore them in agony. Not for that, one would think.

PHILIP. [*at window.*] Some of Rome seems to be burning. Pray God the Senate's safe. [*Pause.*] We shall have to put off our marriage, Antistia.

ANTISTIA. Why, thus it is. We put off and put off till youth's gone, and strength's gone, and beauty's gone. Till two dry sticks mumble by the fire together, wondering what there was in life, when the sap ran.

PHILIP. I must be with my master, Antistia.

ANTISTIA. Your master. When you kiss the dry old hag, Philip, you'll remember these arms that lay wide on the bed, waiting, empty, for years. You'll remember all this beauty, that would have borne you sons but for your master. [*A noise of a lute off.*] Your mistress too, perhaps. Here she comes. Here comes the young wife, that will have little joy of her man, she with her lute girl, twanging a march for her. Here she comes. Open the door.

PHILIP. Our mistress.

Enter CORNELIA *and* JULIA. *The Servants place chairs for the ladies.*

CORNELIA. Philip, there must be an escort from the Senate-house. Tell the Captain of the Guard.

Exeunt PHILIP *and* ANTISTIA.

JULIA. Tell me. Is Cæsar really going to fight your husband? If he is not going to fight, what does he want?

CORNELIA. He wants to rule Rome as a Dictator. But he plans first to be elected Consul. He is lying in Gaul there, thinking, I think, to frighten every one into electing him. [*Going to the window.*] I wish my father would come in, Julia, I'm anxious. What has the Senate decided? [*She walks up and down.*]

JULIA. The Senate will decide that Cæsar must dismiss his army. What does your father think?

CORNELIA. He thinks that my husband ought to put Cæsar down with a strong hand. Who's that? Come in. [*The door is shaken and opened violently.*]

Enter her father, METELLUS SCIPIO.

Father.

METELLUS. Where's your husband? Is he here? Has he been here?

CORNELIA. No, father. What is it?

METELLUS. Still at the House? He must have had my note. Has he sent word to you?

CORNELIA. No. What has happened?

METELLUS. I must talk to you, Cornelia.

JULIA. [*rising.*] Good-bye.

METELLUS. No. No, Cornelia. She mustn't go. You'll have to sleep here, my dear girl. The streets aren't safe to-night. Sit down. We're all involved in this. [*Pause.*] Cornelia. What's your husband going to do?

CORNELIA. Father. But I do not know. He tells me nothing.

METELLUS. I've had letters. Cæsar's advancing into Italy, with all his army.

CORNELIA. To fight us? To attack Rome?

METELLUS. Yes. It's what I always feared. But I never thought the man would be such a scoundrel.

CORNELIA. Does my husband know of this?

METELLUS. Yes. I sent word to him at the Senate to meet me here. I had to ride out to the camp. Cornelia. I don't understand your husband. My dear girl, he's been playing with the situation. I don't think you understand even now. It means that the whole of Rome is being handed over to a political brigand. All the governing classes, the religion of our fathers, all that has made Rome great. This cut-throat is marching to destroy it. Something happened at the camp.

CORNELIA. What, father?

METELLUS. The men, the soldiers, Roman soldiers. Men who had eaten the bread and salt . . They refused duty. They had been bribed to that, by this upstart, Cæsar.

CORNELIA. They will stand and see Rome sacked by this outlaw. But how terrible.

METELLUS. I must see your husband. He's played with us. He must save us.

CORNELIA. There. There. He's coming. There's the sentry.

A VOICE WITHOUT. Attention. Eyes right.

METELLUS. Thank God.

A VOICE WITHOUT. Present arms.

CRIES. Hail! Pompey. Imperator. [*A trumpet blows a flourish.*]

A VOICE WITHOUT. Company. By the right. Quick. March.

PHILIP *enters, opening doors wide, saluting, showing the fasces lining the door. Enter* POMPEY. *He carries a despatch box.* METELLUS *salutes.*

Exit PHILIP. *Doors shut.*

POMPEY. Ah, Julia. Ah, Cornelia. [*He goes to her, and looks into her eyes.*] Ah, beloved. [*Turning wearily.*] I think that Sertorius was right, Julia.

JULIA. Why?

POMPEY. In our Spanish wars, he planned to steal away to the Fortunate Islands. He could be quiet a little there. [*He goes to table dejectedly.*]

METELLUS. You got my note?

POMPEY. Yes. Yes. [*He sits like one stunned.*]

METELLUS. Man. What are you going to do? Cæsar's marching on Rome with forty thousand men.

CORNELIA. But you can check him. You must.

METELLUS. Do you understand? The whole—Does the Senate know?

POMPEY. [*opening his despatch box.*] Sit down, dear. [*To* CORNELIA.] Sit down. The Senate knows. There were seven hundred of us in the Senate. Seven hundred of the best men in Rome, sitting there, at sunset, waiting. I had to stand up, among them. I had to tell them that one who—that a man whom I—a man very dear to me—was marching with an army against this Rome, to destroy all that that great house, in generations of honour, has built up here, of virtue, of justice, of freedom, to the wonder of the world.

METELLUS. Yes. Go on. Go on.

CORNELIA. What are they going to do?

POMPEY. Many there were in the pay of—that man.

METELLUS. How did they take it?

POMPEY. They were silent. But a murmur ran through the house. They moved in their chairs. Even those most glad were awed. [*Pause.*] Then Tullus, a man who owes his bread to me—he is in Cæsar's pay now—rose up smiling, to ask me what troops I had for the defence of Rome.

METELLUS. Yes. And you, the guardian of Rome, what troops have you?

POMPEY. I said that with the two legions sent back from Gaul, and with those reserves called up from the country, I might have thirty thousand men.

METELLUS. What is all this talk of you might have? Those two legions are in Cæsar's pay. They're in mutiny at the camp. They're drawn up there, under the eagles. Their colonels are Cæsar's, body and soul. They refuse to move. As for your reserves they're with the people. They're all for Cæsar. They came crowding out of their tents crying, Peace! Peace! They won't fight. You've mocked us. You've tricked us. You've betrayed Rome.

POMPEY. So they said in the Senate.

METELLUS. Why did you not prepare for this? you've had months in which to prepare?

POMPEY. I have prepared for it, Metellus. But I did not expect it. I thought that a noble act would be remembered, for more than twenty years. I thought that this Rome would be more to a man than a lust for power. And old friendship, I thought something.

METELLUS. I've no patience with you. [*He sits with twitching hands.*] Well. [*Starting up.*] We know what you haven't done. At least tell us what you have done.

POMPEY. Yes. I'll tell you, Metellus. [*Pause.*] When this began between us, I thought of my own time under Sulla. I'd marched into Africa, to the great sea. I was a young man then, I did rash things, but I was lucky. I conquered Africa. Sulla sent word to me then to disband my army, and return. [*To* JULIA *and* CORNELIA.] Forgive my talking of myself like this. [*Pause.*] I thought that my luck was due to genius. I was very vain then, Cornelia. There's not much vanity in me at this moment. I resented Sulla's order. My soldiers resented it. They asked me to be their King in Africa. I obeyed Sulla. I thought—if I did—it might be easier—for the next young conqueror—to obey, too. Not to cause civil war.

CORNELIA. He thought—we both thought, father, that Cæsar would remember that. We had planned how all our party, all the Senate even, should go out into the fields to welcome Cæsar, as Sulla welcomed my husband then, if he came home alone, disbanding his army. That would have been a triumph for Cæsar greater than any Consulship. But Cæsar does not see the Rome we see.

POMPEY. I did not think that Cæsar would be blind to the glory of Rome. [*Going to the window.*]

METELLUS. I'll quote to you now something which you said once in Sicily. "What is all this talk of law," you said, "to us that have swords by our sides?" What? You remember those words? Will you sit still, and see Rome sacked? See the rabble make beastly all that

seven centuries has made here? See their filthy hands laid—laid on these delicate ladies? See our temples spoiled that their rat-faced brats may grow up to eat free bread, and loaf and spit outside the beer-shops. Pah! What did the Senate say?

POMPEY. They gave me absolute power here.

METELLUS. What? Then send out your press. Bill every able-bodied man. Bill the women if the men won't come.

POMPEY. No, Metellus. Not that.

METELLUS. What then, man? [CORNELIA *interposes. Speaking to her husband.*]

CORNELIA. Cneius, it is better to have war, than to see law set aside. The will of Rome must not be slighted, it must not be set aside for the lust of one man. It is the duty of a Roman, dear heart, to go out under the eagles to defend the Will of Rome, even if he goes alone. And you will not go alone. The souls of our fathers will march with you. And if you die, dear one, defending what they died to make, you will die as I would have my lover die.

POMPEY. Ah! Cornelia. You make death hard. But it would be sweet to die so for you.

METELLUS. [*quickly.*] Go on, girl. Oh, move him, Cornelia. Goad him to action. I cannot. For Rome's sake. Move him. Get him out of this child's mood.

POMPEY. Yes. Yes. Yes. [*Slowly.*] I shall fight Cæsar. [*Sharply.*]

METELLUS. Ah! [*Excitedly.*] But at once. Give him no time to win recruits by success. Give them no time here. The rabble don't hesitate. They don't understand a man who hesitates. Give me all the cavalry. Look. I can worry him with those.

POMPEY. Where's the map? [*He quickly takes map from wall.*] It's the effect here, not the beating of Cæsar. We must stiffen the towns against him. That'll check his advance.

METELLUS. Cæsar's quick, mind. He marches light, and he comes a devil of a pace. [*Musingly.*]

POMPEY. You say he's got forty thousand men? Let's see your despatch. Who sent it? [*Taking paper.*] Can you trust this man?

METELLUS. Yes. A clever young fellow.

POMPEY. Young? Where's he served?

METELLUS. He was on Crassus' staff in Parthia. In the smash.

POMPEY. I don't trust ghosts.

METELLUS. Ghosts?

POMPEY. What escapes when an army's destroyed like Crassus'? [*Reading.*] Forty thousand men. Shrewd. This is a shrewd lad, Metellus. He's read a lot of school-books, this man. Come. Forty thousand?

METELLUS. Yes.

POMPEY. No. It's not possible, Metellus. This is politics. Not war. He's forcing our hand. His army's miles away. He's rushing the frontier with a few picked men. The pick of his light foot, and these light Gaulish lancers. It's a bold dash to put all Rome in a panic.

METELLUS. [*biting his nails.*] That's not what you'd have done.

POMPEY. That's how I know I'm right. [*Standing.*] Take the cavalry. Get into touch with him. Harass him. Delay him. Make time for us. I'll come on with all I can get.

METELLUS. Take the gladiators.

POMPEY. No. This is a Roman question. No paid slaves shall decide Rome's fate.

METELLUS. We shall be a desperate lot without them.

CORNELIA. The Navy. Land men from the ships.

METELLUS. They can't march. This campaign is a race.

POMPEY. No. No. Look. I'll send gallopers to the fleet at Brindisi. I'll tell them to lash north, forced

rowing. They'd catch him at Pisaurum. They could cut in on his left flank. So much for the attack. The city here's the problem.

METELLUS. Never mind the city here. The city's for the winner. Always.

POMPEY. [*musing.*] Cæsar has an army in occupation here already. Now to secure Rome.

METELLUS. [*quickly.*] The patricians. Let the patricians form a Committee of Public Safety. They'll settle Cæsar's mobs.

CORNELIA. No. No. There'd be massacre all over Rome. All frightened men are merciless.

METELLUS. Be quiet, girl. Yes, man.

POMPEY. No. That's the wild thing the desperate man always does to make his cause more desperate. It would madden the mob against us. Our task is to win the mob.

CORNELIA. Leave Cato in command here.

METELLUS. What?

CORNELIA. Let Cato raise a force purely to defend Rome. Not a party force at all.

POMPEY. Yes, Cato. He stands outside parties. He has power over both.

METELLUS. No, I say. Power? That man, no. He has no power: he's popular.

POMPEY. It's popularity that's wanted.

METELLUS. It's power that's wanted. A few crucified mutineers. Not Cato telling them of good King Numa.

POMPEY. [*picking up the hammer of his gong.*] We'll send for Cato.

METELLUS. No. No.

POMPEY. Yes.

METELLUS. Wait a minute.

POMPEY. Well?

METELLUS. We want a soldier here.

POMPEY. We want a man whom everybody can trust.

METELLUS. Cato's not firm enough.

POMPEY. I want Rome calm, not intimidated.

METELLUS. I'm not going to serve if that man's left behind in Rome.

POMPEY. Oh, don't say that. What are your reasons against Cato? In this instance.

METELLUS. How will Cato deal with the mutineers in camp?

POMPEY. Ah! There. [*Pause.*] Yes. We can't be hard on those poor fellows. Try and see it as they see it. They've had the choice of refusing duty or beginning a civil war.

METELLUS. A soldier's first duty is obedience.

POMPEY. Is it? I'd rather have him a man first, myself. Only very good soldiers mutiny. Did you ever notice that?

METELLUS. No. Nor you. They must be made examples of.

POMPEY. [*smiling.*] Come. Some wine, Metellus.

METELLUS. [*crossly.*] This isn't a time for wine. [*He stalks up and down the room.*] Suppose we're beaten. I tell you if we're beaten you'll want more than Cato in charge here. You'll want a man to stamp out Cæsar's faction. I'd stop their smiling. By the time Cæsar stormed Rome he'd find few of his friends left. I'd make Rome so sick with blood. By. She'd think no more of Cæsar.

POMPEY. My God! The streets ran blood. In Sulla's time. That once. The carts drove over them.

METELLUS. That was child's play to what this will be.

POMPEY. Yes. Suppose we're beaten. Rome stormed. No, no, never! [*He flings the map aside.*] No. I'll give up Italy rather. I will not fight in Italy. Cæsar's rabble shall have no excuse for sacking Rome.

METELLUS. What? [*A pause.*] Where will you fight him then? In Spain, where your army is?

CORNELIA. Not in Spain.

METELLUS. Why not in Spain?

POMPEY. No. You know the proverb. Spain's a country where a big army starves and a little army gets beaten. I know, I've fought there. And it's far from Rome, and too near Gaul. No, Macedonia. We'll go over with the fleet to Macedonia. There are five good legions from Crassus' smash in Macedonia. We'll prepare an army there.

METELLUS. Yes. But your friends in Rome. Our party here? The Senate? The Consuls?

POMPEY. They must come with us at once to Brindisi, where the fleet lies. We'll take ship there. [*Writing.*] I'm writing to Domitius at Corfinium, to join me instantly with his twenty cohorts. [*Musing.*] I wonder. If he stays, he will be invested. And he will stay, he's as obstinate as a mule. If he marches south at once we shall have twenty thousand. If not, we must leave him to his fate. I must abandon Italy.

METELLUS. [*slowly.*] There's something in it. Yes. I wonder.

POMPEY. It's not so risky. Fighting now is backing losing cards.

METELLUS. We shall lose friends.

POMPEY. We shall gain time.

METELLUS. Let's see the map. [*He takes another map.*] I like it. Yes. It's a good move.

POMPEY. Cæsar will attack my army in Spain, first.

METELLUS. Afraid of its invading his dear Gaul, you mean?

POMPEY. He'll have no choice in the matter. He's got no ships to follow us. I've got the Navy. While he's building ships, I'll build an Army. If he fights my generals in Spain, it will be a year before he can follow me. We shall have a great army by that time.

METELLUS. Yes. An army, eh? Macedonian phalanx,

eh? If we send a fiery sign through Macedonia, all the swordsmen of the hills will come. Out of Dacia, out of Thrace. With Egypt at your back, too.

POMPEY. Yes. Egypt's full of my old soldiers. We can always fall back on King Ptolemy.

METELLUS. [*excitedly*.] Listen. Your idea of Macedonia is splendid! Cæsar won't follow. [*Slapping the table*.] He'll be afraid. Part the world between you. Let Cæsar keep the West. You be King in the East. Build up another Rome in Athens. With you in the East, we could do what Alexander did. We could—

POMPEY. No more ambitions, Metellus. You see where ambition leads. So, Macedonia.

METELLUS. Yes, Macedonia.

CORNELIA. When?

POMPEY. Now, dear.

CORNELIA. To-night?

POMPEY. It doesn't give you much time. It will be hard for you to leave all your pretty things behind.

CORNELIA. I was thinking about your night's rest. Life is book and picture to me. All that is Rome to us comes with us.

METELLUS. Well then, boot and saddle.

POMPEY. Take what men you have, Metellus. And press post-horses. You'll want my orders though. [*He strikes the gong*.]

Enter PHILIP.

PHILIP. Sir.

POMPEY. Ask Theophanes to speak to me a moment.

Exit PHILIP.

Enter THEOPHANES, *who bows and is saluted.*

POMPEY. Sit down. [*He takes papers from despatch box*.] We're going to Macedonia. We take ship at Brindisi. These orders to our party; have them filled in and sent round.

THEOPHANES. Yes. But you won't want them.

POMPEY. You mean that—What do you mean?

THEOPHANES. I mean, you won't want them. Cæsar's at Cremona. He's not marching on Rome. He's encamped in his own province. It was a false alarm.

ALL. What?

POMPEY. How do you know that?

THEOPHANES. Labienus has just come in. Cæsar's legate. I've been talking to him. Cæsar's sending messengers with new proposals to you. He's not marching on Rome.

METELLUS. So we go on again.

POMPEY. What are the new proposals? Does he know?

THEOPHANES. [*shrugging his shoulders.*] His men are beginning to shrink, I believe, now that it comes to the touch. I don't blame them.

CORNELIA. Let us give Cæsar credit for a little nobleness.

METELLUS. Pah! He was in Catiline's conspiracy. It was proved beyond a doubt. Well, Pompey. What are you going to do?

POMPEY. It is very wonderful. I must see Cato. [*Going.*]

METELLUS. Why?

THEOPHANES. He's here.

CATO, *in black robes, enters. He stands with arms folded, looking at them all.*

METELLUS. Well, sir?

POMPEY. Yes, Cato?

CORNELIA. You've heard? Won't you sit down?

CATO. So this is the family party. Well, Pompey. Now I see the drags that hinder your honesty. [*To* JULIA.] You. The critic. You with neither art nor brain. Thinking you show both by condemning them in others.

JULIA. Do you show art and brain by condemning me ?

CATO. Look into your heart, woman.

CATO. [*to* METELLUS.] You, sir. The General. A tailor and a love affair made you a General. Not war. War does not make your kind. But you long for war. You would shriek your country into war, any day, sir, so that humble brave men might make pickings for you, invitations, gold, what you call love affairs, fame. [*To* THEOPHANES, *while* METELLUS *looks him up and down.*] I don't know you, sir. [*To* POMPEY.] And you, the mischief-maker, the genius. Well, which of us was right, Pompey ?

POMPEY. You were right. But I have acted more friendly than Cæsar.

CATO. You have made the mischief. Can you unmake it ?

POMPEY. Can you unmake it ?

CATO. I ? I am going into Sicily. You forget. I am Governor there.

CORNELIA. But now. In this moment of truce. Surely it can be remedied ?

CATO. Yes. At a price.

POMPEY. How ?

CATO. You must go alone, on foot, to Cæsar.

POMPEY. Never.

CATO. And tell him that you come to save Rome from civil war ; that a man's pride is a little thing to that, and that so you have put by your greatness.

CORNELIA. Ah ! Ah ! [*She watches* POMPEY'S *face. All turn to* POMPEY.]

POMPEY. No. I have been a King here. I have been like God here. Kings have come to me on their knees, Cæsar. Cæsar's. I made Cæsar by a stroke of my pen. No. Ah, no.

CATO. Cæsar would be shamed to tears, Pompey. Would not that victory content you ?

POMPEY. I cannot. No, I cannot.

CATO. Not to save Rome, Pompey?

POMPEY. No. I should be a mock. No. No.

CORNELIA. You would be a fire, Pompey, for all time. All the lamps of the world would be kindled at that nobleness.

POMPEY. You wish it, too, dear heart?

CORNELIA. [*softly.*] I wish it.

POMPEY. [*looking round.*] To a young man whom I have made. Oh, Cato, Cato! Is kindness to a friend only a bitter form of suicide? [*He fumbles at the clasp of his purple.*] Very well, I will go, Marcus. [*He flings his purple aside.*]

CATO. I thought you were Pompey the Little. I wronged you.

METELLUS. [*to* THEOPHANES.] So. [*They exchange glances.*]

POMPEY. Old man. Old man.

A noise without. Cries. A sentry calls "Halt." Struggling. Shouts of "Stand back." "Let me in." The spears rattle. The door is shaken.

THEOPHANES. [*opening door.*] What's this? [*Pause.*] Let him in, Sentry.

Enter filthy Horseman, dust to the eyes, tottering. The door is left open, showing Soldiers.

METELLUS. One of Cæsar's lancers.

THEOPHANES. A deserter, eh?

THE MAN. [*gasping.*] Which of you is the lord?

POMPEY. [*pouring wine for him.*] I am he. Drink this. Take your time. What is it?

THE MAN. [*spilling his drink like a man half dead of thirst.*] Cæsar! Cæsar! I escaped last night. Cæsar!

CORNELIA. What?

THE MAN. He's crossed the Rubicon. With all his army. Marching on Rome. Be here in two days.

A pause.

POMPEY. [*resuming his purple.*] That settles it. There can be no treaty now.

CORNELIA. So war has begun.

POMPEY. [*sadly.*] There it is. Only it is more terrible now. More terrible than it was. [*Turning to go.*] It must be war now to the end.

METELLUS. [*picking up the orders from the table and slapping them to command attention.*] And now. To Brindisi. [*He walks briskly towards the door, but halts opposite* CATO, *at whom he glares.* POMPEY *and* CORNELIA *halt to watch him.*] Well, sir. My Conscript Father. Will you crawl before Cæsar now, sir? It is long since a Roman bade his King to lick the dust before a traitor. You and your kind may sue to such. Rome puts other thoughts into our hearts.

CATO. There are two Romes, Metellus. One built of brick by hodsmen. But the Rome I serve glimmers in the uplifted heart; it is a court for the calm gods, that Rome. Let me not shame that city. Advance the eagles.

A VOICE WITHOUT. Present arms.

A trumpet blows a blast.

CURTAIN

ACT II

Scene I

Staff-officer's tent at Durazzo. Walls of plain canvas. Canvas door running on rings at back R. Smaller canvas door at back L. Table and camp-chairs. Everything bare and severe. DOMITIUS, LENTULUS, THEOPHANES, *at the table.*

DOMITIUS. So it goes on. And Spain is lost. Look at this position here. Cæsar has shut us in here like so many sheep in a pen. Has Pompey no pride? Or has he grown besotted?

THEOPHANES. Flaccus is raiding Cæsar's lines this morning. He will attack them in three places. And break them.

DOMITIUS. [*fiercely.*] Flaccus is a boy. A whole year wasted, and half the empire lost.

Enter POMPEY *hurriedly. They salute.*

POMPEY. Good morning. I have called you all together to tell you of the loss of my Spanish army, lately commanded by Afranius. We had expected victory, from Afranius' letters. But we are soldiers. We know what Fortune is in war. We are not merchants, to cast him for failing.

DOMITIUS. We have given up Italy, and thrown away Spain. Africa is invaded and Sicily taken. We have given up and drawn back everywhere. And why? That we might come here to be cooped up by an army half our size. I want to know why. We all want to know why.

POMPEY. I remember Sulla saying that he could make an army love him by talking to the privates occasionally.

But that no amount of talking would make his generals love his ideas. Be content. And bide my time.

LENTULUS. Magnus. I am not given to criticism; but this biding time is ruin. We are losing allies; we are losing Rome. Rome looked to you to crush this upstart. Instead of that you have let a rebellion grow into a civil war. You have watched your adherents stamped out piecemeal. You have done nothing.

POMPEY. Wait.

DOMITIUS. We have waited for a year.

POMPEY. I ask you to wait a little longer.

LENTULUS. Magnus, while we wait, the rabble is stamping out aristocracy throughout the world. [*He rises.*]

POMPEY. Sit down, Lentulus. I tell you to wait. The war is in my hands.

DOMITIUS. War is in the hands of the man who strikes. [*He thrusts aside the lesser door.*] There. Among the crags there. By the pine-clump. In that great red heap like an iron mine. That is Cæsar's camp. I've been out there night after night, worming over rocks and down gullies, keeping my course by the stars, so that, when a chance came, I could take an army into that camp blindfold. I've a map here. [*Throws down a paper.*] Those red dots are the sentries. Each dot was made at the risk of my heart's blood. I've grovelled in the earth before all those sentries, praying for the moon to go in, while they talked of their love-affairs. I've seen the sergeant coming his rounds with a lantern, and shut my eyes lest they should gleam, and betray me. I could take that camp with two legions in the blackest night of the year. This war is breaking the world in two. And you send Flaccus with a corporal's guard to pull down a hundred yards of paling. Justify that, before you tell me to wait.

POMPEY. Flaccus is fighting the decisive battle of the war.

LENTULUS. This is trifling. [*He rises and moves away.*]

DOMITIUS. The decisive. I will tell you what a decisive battle is. I took part in one for you at Massilia three months ago. At the end of that siege, there was no city. There were no people. Only some death's-heads dying of plague, and a few madmen on the walls. And outside, there were towers flinging fires at us, and slings flinging rocks at us, and miles of army coming up to the sack. That was a decisive battle.

POMPEY. Domitius, when a man thinks fixedly of anything, desiring it with his whole nature, he creates a witch in the air, who eats that lust of his till she is a strong pitiless devil.

Domitius, you are given up to a devil. A devil of lust for battle. But you are fiercer than a devil, for when there is no enemy you fight your friends, and when there are no friends you fight yourself. And when you have torn yourself bloody you fight ideas, not because you understand them, and hate them, but because when you are not fighting you are nothing. I fear you, Domitius. A man's friends are those who understand his ideas, and advance them. You are Cæsar's friend, Domitius.

DOMITIUS. [*intensely.*] You killed my brother, when you were a young man. For that, I swore to tear your heart out. You dined with me once, twenty years ago. You will not remember. I put my hand upon your shoulder. I had a knife in my other hand. I could have stabbed you to the heart. And there you would have died, Magnus, in a mess of roses and spilled wine, before my old Marian friends. But I saw that you were a better man than my brother. Something you said. I saw that you were what Rome wanted.

Pause.

[*Fiercely.*] You know better than to call me Cæsar's friend. I've made Cæsar rock in his seat.

POMPEY. You are Cæsar's friend. Your heart beats pulse for pulse with Cæsar's heart. You malign me because my hands are not red from butchery like his. And at this moment, while you malign me, Flaccus is ending the war. Take no more thought of the war. The war is over.

The Generals draw to one side and talk apart for a moment.

POMPEY. Rome is the problem now. You would do well to think of Rome. This is the seventh popular rising since my boyhood. Seven desperate attempts to change in fifty years. Does that teach you nothing ?

LENTULUS. Theophanes.

DOMITIUS. Yes.

THEOPHANES. Magnus.

POMPEY. I offered Cæsar a broken and distracted Italy. He took it. A turbulent, useless Spain. He took it. I have flung down half a useless world, and he has gorged it and come on into the trap. I am camped in plenty, with six fleets ruling the seas. Cæsar is trenched in mud, living on roots. Besieging me, you call it ? He has dug thirty miles of works. He has not enough men to guard ten miles. His men are exhausted and starving. He stays in those works during my pleasure ; no longer. He cannot force me to battle. He cannot raid my lines. He cannot go back to Rome.

And I, with one slight thrust, am tumbling him into ruin.

Enter an ORDERLY *with a despatch. He gives it to* POMPEY.

LENTULUS. From Flaccus ?

DOMITIUS. You are of the Fifth ?

ORDERLY. From Titus Pulcio, my lord.

POMPEY. Very well.

ORDERLY. Have you any orders, my lord ?

POMPEY. No orders. Acknowledge.

Exit ORDERLY, *saluting*.

THEOPHANES. Is it important?

POMPEY. Read it.

THEOPHANES. [*reading*.] From Titus Pulcio, legate, fifth legion, to Headquarters: "The attack under Valerius Flaccus has been repulsed with heavy loss. The survivors have fallen back upon the old works, south of the river, where desperate fighting is now going on. I am marching with what I have. The enemy is in force. Stragglers report position hopeless."

DOMITIUS. These thrusting youths want a lesson. Now, Magnus. Justify your plan, now.

POMPEY. Wait.

LENTULUS. Wait? While our right flank is being rolled up?

POMPEY. It would take Cæsar two days to bring up enough troops to crush our right.

DOMITIUS. Surely you will smash this attacking force.

POMPEY. It will exhaust itself. Cæsar can neither reinforce it, nor replace it. I am fighting with the thought of Rome before me. I will not march back to Rome over corpses, in the Sulla fashion.

DOMITIUS. At least you will march back over those whom we took last night. I killed those.

POMPEY. You killed those men?

DOMITIUS. They were rebels, I tell you. Traitors.

POMPEY. I will judge traitors.

DOMITIUS. They were my own deserters. Dogs. I will serve all traitors so. And I tell you this.

POMPEY. Not a word. You disgrace our cause, Domitius. [*Pause, and change of voice.*] I may win this war, or this [*showing his gold eagle-clasp*] may pay a camp-trull yonder. But whether I win or go down, those on my side shall act like knights of the bodyguard of God. See to it.

Enter Chief Centurion COTTA, *battered.*

COTTA. I report the death of commander Flaccus, my lord.

POMPEY. Killed?

COTTA. Yes, my lord.

DOMITIUS. That is what happens in skirmishing. Nothing is done, and the good man gets killed.

COTTA. We were beaten back, my lord; the surprise failed.

POMPEY. Yes? Well?

COTTA. We rushed their wall, tore up their palisades, and set fire to two of the turrets. Then they surrounded us. I should think they had two legions on to us. We had to cut our way home.

POMPEY. And your commander?

COTTA. He was killed in the thick, my lord. After our storm, we were driven back on to the palisades. The pales were all on fire, all along the line, burning hard. I looked one minute and saw him backed right up against the flames, with a dozen Thracians. They had a whole troop of lancers stabbing at them. I got within a few paces of him, trying to bring him off, but the fireballs burst so thick one couldn't see. My men were being cut to pieces, the cavalry was cutting in on our rear, and there came a rush of spearmen which swept me off the rampart. I saw his body falling back into the fire, all lit up. But we could never get near the place again. They cut us to pieces down on the flat. They killed eight hundred of us.

LENTULUS. A severe repulse.

DOMITIUS. Wasted. Wasted lives. Utterly useless, wicked waste.

POMPEY. And then? What happened then?

COTTA. They drove us back into the old works by the river; over the outer wall into the ditch. [*Pause.*] We were penned up in the ditch like beasts in a slaughter-house. They swarmed up above us on the wall, pelting

us. We were below them, grinding in the mud, huddled like sheep. Men will always huddle when they have no room to use their shields. It was so fierce, that I thought our men would break. But we could not break. We were shut in. We were so pushed together that the dead could not fall. And being pressed man to man gave us a kind of courage. I got up on a heap where the wall had fallen. I wanted to see. I could see all a wave of red plumes where Cæsar's Gauls were pressing up, calling to their horses. Arr. Arr. There was a roar everywhere like ice breaking up in the spring. Behind their main attack they were making a way through the wall for their horse. Every now and then their picks flashed and the earth came scattering down. It was worst at the gate. The noise of the axes on the gate was like a ship-yard. They brought up a tree to batter it, and every time they ran at it, you could see the wood give, in great splinters.

There was a little grey centurion by the gate. I could not see his legion, for his helmet had been smashed by a stone; but I think he was of the fifth. He had a green scarf over his shoulder. He was down under the gate shoring it up with baulks. About a dozen naked Gauls swarmed up on to the wall above him, singing their pæan. They hurled down darts right on to him. The darts struck the earth all round him, till the pebbles were flying in his face. He had no shield. Only a camp-follower, who held the wood while he lammed it in with a maul. And every time the batterers ran in, those two stopped work, and cheered, and flung the darts back, and then drove in another pile. I thought we were lost; but it was our fight, my lord.

For I heard fifes, playing "The Day of Zama", and men singing. It was a cohort of the fifth, marching to support our left flank. They came on slowly, in line, with their heads up, and the fifes playing. The centurions led them, singing, marching well ahead. It was a fine thing

to see those men coming on. Their ranks were so locked that the oak-trees on their shields made a green breastwork across their front. It was our fight after that. We caught them in the outer ditch. The ditch is choked with them. Cæsar lost a full thousand there in the ditch. They were broken. We shook them to the heart. They will not face us again, my lord, for a long time. Nor any enemy. Cæsar will have trouble with them.

POMPEY. Very well, Cotta.

COTTA. They are sending in the body with a trumpet, my lord.

POMPEY. Yes! Send me the returns of killed and wounded and the centurions' reports. Your legion will stand no watch to-night. See that your men rest. Order wine from the sutlers for them. I will speak to them to-night.

COTTA. Thank you, my lord.

He goes out, saluting.

DOMITIUS. One moment, Cotta.

He goes out, after him.

THEOPHANES. Cæsar is sending a trumpet. Can he be suing for peace?

LENTULUS. Why should he sue for peace after a skirmish?

POMPEY. It was the pricking of a bubble. He is suing for peace. And if I grant peace, I shall have these to fight. And if I refuse peace, this ruin will go on.

THEOPHANES. Do we receive this trumpet?

Enter DOMITIUS.

DOMITIUS. Magnus. Cæsar is in disorder. His men are leaving the trenches. He is withdrawing. His south walls are abandoned already.

POMPEY. Yes. He has learned his lesson.

He must pay them now for the life they have spent for him. He cannot pay them. The most that he can do is to save them from the result of his insanity.

THEOPHANES. He can retreat.

POMPEY. How can he retreat? He cannot retreat. Where can he go? My navies hold the sea. To the north there are savage tribes. The south is blocked by my garrisons. I am here in the west with my army. And to the east lies Metellus, with another army.

He has one chance of saving them. He can sue for peace.

DOMITIUS. You are not going to receive this herald?

POMPEY. Yes. Rome must have peace.

If Cæsar will make submission—

DOMITIUS. A surrender will be useless.
THEOPHANES. Cæsar must be destroyed.
LENTULUS. How will you settle Rome, with Cæsar alive?

POMPEY. This war has gone on all my life. Sulla's method failed. Catiline's method failed. They shall not be tried again. Rome shall be settled this time finally.

DOMITIUS. If you hesitate to strike now, you are a traitor, Magnus.

POMPEY. I have made my plan.

[*Sternly.*] I will abide by it. To your place. Murmur no more.

No little gust of passion shall set me wavering.

A VOICE *without and a trumpet.*

VOICE. Present arms. Port arms. Pass friend. Present arms.

POMPEY. Life is nothing. It is the way of life which is so much. Enter there.

COTTA. [*entering.*] The body, my lord. With the trumpet.

Enter Bearers with the body of VALERIUS FLACCUS. COTTA *and the others salute the corpse. Then, with a solemnity of trumpets blowing points of ceremony,* MARCUS ACILIUS *enters, led by two Centurions. He*

is blindfolded. COTTA, *the Bearers, and the Centurions go out, when the handkerchief is removed.*

ACILIUS. I bring back your soldier, Cneius Pompey.

POMPEY. You bring a message ?

ACILIUS. I come from Cæsar.

POMPEY. Well ?

ACILIUS. He asks you to end this war. The gods have given you an equal measure of victory. You have both lost and won half the Roman world. Now that the world is shared between you, you can consent to a peace. To-morrow, if fortune favour one of you, the fortunate one will think himself too great to parley. [*Pause.*] Cæsar asks that a peace may be concluded. If you will undertake to do the same, he will make public oath to disband his army within three days. That is his proposal.

POMPEY. More than a year ago, the Senate ordered Cæsar to disband his troops. That decree still stands disregarded. I cannot treat with a rebel. Cæsar must obey that decree and submit to the Senate's mercy.

ACILIUS. The quarrel is between you and Cæsar, Magnus.

POMPEY. Not at all. I represent the Senate.

ACILIUS. Your party of the Senate, which my party does not recognise.

POMPEY. These are the facts, Acilius. Cæsar has attacked Republican rule. He has failed. I make it a condition of treaty that he acknowledge Republican authority.

ACILIUS. Cæsar has never denied that authority. He is in arms against a perversion of that authority by unscrupulous men. That he seeks to end the Republic is denied by my presence here, asking for peace. Cæsar is no suitor to you. That great mind is its own sufficient authority. Farewell, Magnus.

Going.

[*At door.*] You will grant peace if Cæsar kneels in the

dust. Very well. Rome is more to him than honour. He will kneel in the dust, in the most public place in Rome. He will submit himself, body and cause, to the judgement of the Roman people there assembled.

Will that suffice ?

POMPEY. No.

The mob has no voice in this matter. The mob must be taught to obey its rulers. Cæsar must submit to the Senate.

ACILIUS. Then the blood will be on your hands, Magnus.

Going.

POMPEY. It will suffice if Cæsar surrender to myself in the presence of both armies. But a public act of submission must be made. Otherwise it will be thought that Cæsar drove us from Italy, and forced us to accept his terms. That I cannot allow.

ACILIUS. I am to tell Cæsar that you refuse. [*Quietly.*] From fear of what the world may think ?

POMPEY. You count that a little thing, the thought of the world ? For what else are we fighting ; but to control the thought of the world ? What else matters, Acilius ?

You think that I am fighting to be a master ? Not so. I am fighting because I know what Cæsar wants. I have watched his career step by step. Cæsar means to be king. He has bribed the rabble to crown him.

You see only the brilliant man, winning—what he has the power to win. I look beyond that man. I see Rome under a secret, bloody domination and a prey to future Cæsars. That shall not be.

I am an old man now, Acilius. I have been fighting this battle all my life. I hope now to end it. You have heard my terms.

He strikes a gong.

A pause. Enter a Centurion.

Do you accept them or refuse them? Take your time.

Pause.

ACILIUS. I refuse them.

POMPEY. [*to Centurion.*] You will take the Gemella legion, drive in Cæsar's outposts and burn the works.

Exit Centurion.

ACILIUS. There is no voice for peace, then. I have failed. Now that my task is done, may I speak with you privately?

POMPEY. Yes. On a private matter. Is your business private?

ACILIUS. Yes. It is private.

POMPEY. [*to Generals.*] Leave us.

Exit Generals.

[*To* ACILIUS.] Be brief.

ACILIUS. My mother married you, years ago.

She was dragged by force from my father so that you might be propped by a vote the more. She died of a broken heart, in your bed.

You have taken worse props, now. These nobles. They are using you to stamp out democracy, so that they may plunder in peace for another fifty years.

And when you have done their task: when the war is over—

POMPEY. [*taking up gong.*] I cannot listen to this.

ACILIUS. —you plan to make just those reforms for which Cæsar is fighting. You mean to cripple the aristocracy. And they will stop you. Domitius hates you. Metellus fears you. Lentulus is jealous of you. They are planning to get rid of you, even now.

Pause.

Get rid of them, Magnus. Take Cæsar as your friend. End the war. Drive them out.

POMPEY. And after?

ACILIUS. You could make Rome what you please.

POMPEY *strikes the gong.*

Re-enter Generals.

POMPEY. And after? [*Pause.*] Your party shall submit to mine. [*He writes a few words.*] You may take this to Cæsar.

[*Gives writing.*]

Give this man safe conduct.

ACILIUS. I am going, Magnus. I shall not see you again.

THEOPHANES *goes out.*

POMPEY. [*who has turned away.*] Well?

ACILIUS. Pride is a mean thing in the presence of death. To-day you are great, and the kings bring tribute to you. To-morrow you may be this, only this, praised by the worm.

Showing corpse.

POMPEY. You talk of the presence of death. Man, I am in the presence of life, and death's a pleasure to it.

COTTA *and Centurions enter with* THEOPHANES. *They salute.*

Who cares what I may be? I may be carrion. But while I am man, and carry a faith in me, I will guard that faith. See this man through the lines.

With a solemn blowing of a point of ceremony, COTTA *and the Centurions go out, leading* ACILIUS, *blindfolded. Murmurs. Acclamations.*

The Generals eye POMPEY. *He walks to the body and looks at it.*

POMPEY. Poor boy. You have gone a long way from this inn.

When you were born, women kissed you, and watched you as you slept, and prayed for you, as women do. When you learned to speak, they praised you; they laughed and were so tender with you, even when they were in pain. And to-night you will wander alone, where no woman's love can come to you, and no voice speak to you, and no grief of ours touch you to an answer.

The dead must be very lonely.

DOMITIUS. [*coming forward and looking at the body.*] That? Why be sad at that?

He was marked for it. [*Quietly.*] Magnus. I have something to say. I give you full credit for what you have done. You were right. But not so right as I would have been. Destruction's what war's for. Still. It has happened. Now there is Rome. How are you going back to Rome without the moral support of a victory?

LENTULUS. In Rome, it is said openly that you have been shuffled about at Cæsar's will.

THEOPHANES. And that we have been beaten in every battle.

POMPEY. What is that noise, there?

Cries of "Victory." Clapping. Trumpets. A cry of "Present Arms." The spears rattle.

Enter LUCIUS LUCCEIUS, *in the civil dress.*

LENTULUS. Lucceius.

THEOPHANES. Lucius Lucceius.

LUCCEIUS *stands looking at them silently. He salutes the body, and advances slowly.*

LUCCEIUS. [*slowly.*] I salute you, Cneius Pompey. I come from Rome.

POMPEY. What news do you bring from Rome?

LUCCEIUS. News of your triumph, Magnus.

Cæsar's army, under Curio, invaded Africa.

Curio is killed. His army is destroyed. Africa is saved to us.

He takes a laurel wreath.

The Roman people send me with this wreath, Magnus.

He offers it, with reverent dignity.

POMPEY. [*taking the wreath and laying it on* FLACCUS' *head.*] Once, long ago, I played with you. By the fish-pools at Capua, watching the gold-fish.

You asked me for my purple, that glittering day long ago. [*He lays his purple over* FLACCUS.] All things for

which men ask are granted. A word may be a star or a spear for all time. This is the day of my triumph, it seems.

A distant trumpet winds. It winds again.

THEOPHANES. There is a horn blowing.

POMPEY. It is blowing like a death-horn.

DOMITIUS. It is a Roman call.

In Cæsar's camp.

DOMITIUS *flings aside the canvas.*

It is the "Prepare to March". He is in retreat. His huts are burning. They are winding out upon the road there. They are floundering up the pass. Two thousand horse could ruin them.

POMPEY. Ruin is not my province. Let them destroy themselves. They are wandering out into the wilds without heart, without hope, without plan. That is the forlornest march ever called by trumpets. There is death in every heart there already. Well. We shall follow.

Call the chief centurions.

THEOPHANES *goes to the door, to the Sentry without.*

We win.

[*Going to the body.*] And to-night we shall be marching from this poor earth, pursuing Cæsar, marching to many trumpets, under the stars, singing as we march. I shall end Sulla's war, now. But we will kill the rebellion, remember, not those Romans.

The Chief Centurions enter.

A trumpeter there. Strike camp. Prepare to march.

A Centurion going out, calls.

Take up the body.

1ST CENTURION.

Man is a sacred city, built of marvellous earth.

2ND CENTURION.

Life was lived nobly here to give this body birth.

3RD CENTURION.

Something was in this brain and in this eager hand.

4TH CENTURION.

Death is so dumb and blind, Death cannot understand.

They lift the bier.

Death drifts the brain with dust and soils the young limbs' glory.

Death makes women a dream and men a traveller's story,

Death drives the lovely soul to wander under the sky,

Death opens unknown doors. It is most grand to die.

They go out, followed by POMPEY. LENTULUS, DOMITIUS, THEOPHANES, *and* LUCCEIUS *remain.*

Now without comes a shaking blast from a trumpet. It is taken up and echoed by many trumpets, near and far, blowing the legionary calls, till the air rings.

CURTAIN

Scene II

The same. Taper light. Dawn later. POMPEY *writing.* *Enter* LUCCEIUS.

LUCCEIUS. Not sleeping, Magnus?

POMPEY. I have had evil dreams.

Are you from Rounds?

Is all quiet?

LUCCEIUS. Yes.

There is a light near Cæsar's camp. They are burning their dead.

Our scouts took two lancers. They say that Cæsar's men are dying. Of fever and hunger.

POMPEY. Yes. He must surrender within a few days. And so they are burning their dead?

LUCCEIUS. Yes.

POMPEY. Now we have Rome to settle.

Pause.

I lie awake, thinking.

What are we, Lucceius?

LUCCEIUS. Who knows? Dust with a tragic purpose. Then an end.

POMPEY. No. But what moves us?

I saw a madman in Egypt. He was eyeless with staring at the sun. He said that ideas come out of the East, like locusts. They settle on the nations and give them life; and then pass on, dying, to the wilds, to end in some scratch on a bone, by a cave-man's fire.

I have been thinking that he was wise, perhaps. Some new swarm of ideas has been settling on Rome. A new kind of life is being born. A new spirit. I thought a year ago that it was crying out for the return of kings, and personal rule. I see now that it is only crying out for a tyrant to sweep the old life away.

Rome has changed, Lucceius. Outwardly, she is the same, still. A city which gives prizes to a few great people. A booth where the rabble can sell their souls for bread, and their bodies for the chance of plunder. Inwardly, she is a great democratic power struggling with obsolete laws.

The crowd must have more power.

LUCCEIUS. [*surprised.*] That would be a denial of your whole life, Magnus.

You have been crushing democracy for forty years.

POMPEY. I have crushed rebellions. I mean now to crush their cause.

There must be a change. A great change.

Enter METELLUS, DOMITIUS, LENTULUS.

LUCCEIUS. [*giving paper.*] This is my report. [*He salutes and goes. At the door he pauses, looking out.*] The pyre is still burning. They must be dying like flies.

Exit.

METELLUS. [*as the Generals sit facing* POMPEY.] Cæsar has sent to me privately, Magnus, to beg me to ask terms from you. I sent back his letter without comment.

The war is over ; but we are not yet secure. We shall have to garrison the provinces for some years with men whom we can trust.

Spain and Gaul are arranged for among ourselves. It is the lesser appointments. Magnus, I want your voice, on behalf of Lucius Tuditanus. I was thinking of sending him as my deputy into Asia.

POMPEY. Is that the soldier Tuditanus, who did so well under you ?

To DOMITIUS.

DOMITIUS. No. His nephew.

METELLUS. He's a young man on my personal staff.

POMPEY. Has he qualified for the prætorship ?

METELLUS. No. Not in the strict legal sense. But he was of the greatest use to me in Asia. He would be competent.

POMPEY. In what way was he of use to you ?

METELLUS. In the collection of tribute, when they disputed our assessments. They hoped to wrangle in Court, without paying, till Cæsar saved them. Tuditanus stopped that. He judged the claims on the spot, and the tax was paid, or distrained, there and then. Often the patrols did not have to unsaddle. And as we needed the money quickly, the system was of great use to me.

POMPEY. Yes. But the law is plain, Metellus. A prætor and a prætor's deputy represent Rome. It is a responsible office. They judge and govern in Rome's name. Men must be trained for it. What has Tuditanus done, besides this tax collection, that the laws should be broken for him ?

LENTULUS. His father has made many sacrifices for us.

POMPEY. There is a growing belief in Rome that a sacrifice should be a good investment. Anything else ?

METELLUS. He is one of those brilliant young men,

of proved loyalty, for whom we ought to provide. I recommend him to you.

POMPEY. That is much in his favour. But I want proof that he can govern. Tell me, Metellus. Where has he shown administrative talent?

METELLUS. He has not shown it. He is a man whom we ought to bind to us. He would soon learn. We could give him a staff of old soldiers, to steady him, at first.

POMPEY. Has he any power of command? Where has he served?

DOMITIUS. He was in the horse for a time, in Lycia.

POMPEY. [*to* METELLUS.] What recommended him to you?

METELLUS. Never mind the merit. I am contending for the principle, that our friends must be rewarded.

POMPEY. Yes. But prætorian power. No. He must qualify.

LENTULUS. Before you reject him, will you not see him? Metellus and Domitius would not recommend him without grave reason. I might say, without urgent reason.

POMPEY. I want an imperative reason. Without that, it would be a gross act of favouritism. And illegal. As for the results, we have seen such prætors. We should have a rising, and possibly a frontier war. No. Tuditanus cannot be prætor.

METELLUS. Remember, Magnus. Tuditanus is one of many. Others are in the same position. With a right to expect employment.

POMPEY. Peace will try their quality.

There are men with Cæsar with a right to expect employment.

The Generals look at each other and sigh.

DOMITIUS. There is another point. We are going back to Rome. Rome is in a rebellious, unsettled state. We must secure ourselves.

I ask that every man of any standing in Rome be brought to trial, even if he have remained neutral. If the rebels have attacked authority, the neutrals have ignored it. And both must suffer. Rebellion must be stamped out.

Gives paper.

The four hundred men in this list have actively helped the rebellion. There can be no question of trial for them. I ask that they be put to death.

POMPEY. That is out of the question. War will end when Cæsar surrenders. I cannot allow reprisals. I want Rome settled.

LENTULUS. Perhaps you will explain how you plan to administer Rome . . when we return.

METELLUS. [*softly.*] There will be an amnesty for offences committed ?

POMPEY. Yes.

DOMITIUS. You will pardon these rebels ?

POMPEY. If they submit.

LENTULUS. [*slowly.*] Will you allow them to help in the reconstruction ?

POMPEY. [*hotly.*] Yes. Power is in too few hands. There must be a change in Rome. I would have these four hundred firebrands made Senators, to help us make the change wisely.

METELLUS. So.

DOMITIUS. Magnus. There is only one way of settling Rome. By showing her who is master in a way which she'll remember.

LENTULUS. Any dallying with these rebels will leave us where we were before. Hated, and flouted by the rabble, and in danger from it. Losing our privileges, one by one. Losing our possessions and our power. Magnus, I would ask you to weigh this proposal very carefully. It affects the future of the patrician idea.

POMPEY. And of Rome. What kind of future do you expect from a massacre like this ? I will tell you

what you will get. You will drive these four hundred firebrands into the Provinces, where it will take five years of war to crush them.

No. I'll go back with peace. Not a man shall be touched.

LENTULUS. Before we go back with peace, we must end the war. I have had letters from Rome.

Popular voice in Rome says that we have feared to risk a battle. That the war drags on, when it could be ended in a day.

That we dare not kill these representatives of the people.

That is a dangerous spirit in a city which we are about to rule. That spirit can only be broken by decisive success. We must go back with victory. A battle is certain victory to ourselves. We ask you to give battle.

METELLUS. We have asked this before, without success. We ask it now, feeling it to be a grave need. Lentulus has mentioned it as a political expedient. I add to that this, that our treasury is nearly empty. We have no means of raising more money. We have drained Spain and Asia for years to come. And your inactive plan of campaign has killed our credit. We must fight. We cannot afford to keep the field for another month.

POMPEY. Cæsar cannot keep the field for another week.

DOMITIUS. Cæsar will drag on, day by day, till the corn is ripe. It is not many days now to harvest. You let his men get a full provision and you will see how long they will keep the field. I could break that impostor's strength with the horse alone.

POMPEY. I can break his strength without risking a life. I will not give battle. Be thankful that we can end such a war with so little bloodshed.

The Generals rise.

DOMITIUS. You are the oldest, Lentulus.

LENTULUS. It may lose us votes, remember. You are the most popular.

METELLUS. Perhaps I should do it. I am related.

POMPEY. What do you wish to say?

METELLUS. Magnus. I have to speak to you.

You love power too well.

Your command ends with the war.

You have tried to prolong your command by neglecting to end the war.

But the war is over.

You plan now to retain command while you impose your will upon the State. That is a menace to the Republic. We have been forced to convoke the Senate to discuss it.

The Senate has sanctioned the appointment of Tuditanus, and the list of the proscribed. It also commands that you give battle to Cæsar.

He gives a paper.

POMPEY *walks up stage slowly, then down. He stands at table, fronting them.*

POMPEY. What do you expect me to say, Conscript Fathers? That I refuse to obey this order?

I could refuse.

If I were Cæsar, or Lentulus, or you, Domitius, or Metellus, I should refuse.

And my soldiers, or Cæsar's there, would work my will on a Senate which had so insulted me.

But I am Pompey the Great. I am bound by my military oath.

Do not think to humble me. Death is a little thing to the loss of conscience.

Death is easier than life to me.

But even if I die, Rome will be a prey to unscrupulous men.

There is no hope for Rome. She ends here. Disaster begins.

But for me, you would now be beggars at Cæsar's doors. I saved Rome from Cæsar.

And now Rome is to beg her life from you. You have used Pompey the Great to ruin her.

But you have first to fight for her.

You shall give your sin a dignity, by risking your lives for it.

He strikes the gong.

Enter an Aide.

[*To Aide.*] Give the signal for battle.

Exit Aide.

You have your will, now.

This is the end.

And at the end, think what it is which you destroy.

Rome is nothing to you. Only the reward of greed, and hate, and pride.

The city where justice was born.

Look beyond your passions, at what Rome is. It is the state of Rome, not passion, which concerns us now.

A little while ago she was a market-town, governed by farmers. Now she rules Europe.

And in herself no change. Cramped still. Fettered. The same laws. The same rulers. Like iron on her heart.

And forty years of civil war. All my life. A blind, turbulent heaving towards freedom.

Without, a confused noise as of many men stirring from sleep. Shouted orders are clearly heard above the murmur.

THE ORDERS. Fall in. Dress. Cohort. By the right. Cohort, to the left, wheel. Eyes left. Cohort. Fifers, three paces to the— Attention, etc., etc. Cohort. Salute, etc.

In a moment's silence a trumpet blows outside the tent. Cheering.

POMPEY. Five minutes ago I had Rome's future in my hand. She was wax to my seal. I was going to free her.

Now is the time to free her. You can tear the scales and the chains from her. You can make her a State so splendid that Athens would be a dust-heap to her.

You will not.

You will drive her back three centuries, so that you may wreak your passions on her.

Go on, then. Destroy her. Or be destroyed.

Whether you win or lose, Rome ends.

A pause. Orders without.

ORDERS. The cohorts will advance in— Cohort, halt. Ground arms. Attention. Form four deep. Attention. By the right. Quick march. Cohort. Cohort. To the left. Turn.

DOMITIUS. What orders have you?

For the next minute or two a noise of troops moving.

POMPEY. You have fought this battle many times in your hearts. [*He flings the doors wide, showing a bright dawn.*] Now you will fight it in earnest. You will fight the wild beasts whom I could have starved like beasts.

Go to your divisions.

The Generals go out silently. POMPEY *stands by the table.*

ORDERS. Cohort. Halt. Ground arms. Attention. Form four deep. Cohort. Left turn.

Enter PHILIP. POMPEY *does not look at him. Fifes of a cohort pass.*

PHILIP. Do you want me, my lord?

POMPEY. [*turning.*] Can you sing, Philip?

PHILIP. Sing, my lord?

POMPEY. Yes.

PHILIP. I don't know, my lord.

POMPEY. What was that song we had? That night in the Asian wars, when we broke Mithridates?

PHILIP. Me to sing it, my lord?

POMPEY. About something coming to an end.

PHILIP. [*hesitating.*] I don't know whether I can, my lord.

POMPEY. Sing.

PHILIP. I'll try, my lord.

He repeats.

Though we are ringed with spears, though the last hope is gone,
Romans stand firm, the Roman dead look on.
Before our sparks of life blow back to him who gave,
Burn clear, brave hearts, and light our pathway to the grave.

POMPEY. Take my purple, Philip.

He flings his purple aside.

A CENTURION. Eyes left. Salute.

A COHORT PASSING. Hail! Pompey. Imperator.

Trumpets.

CURTAIN

ACT III

The Poop of a Lesbian Merchantman of the First Century B.C.

On each side, the bulwark of a ship, painted green. There are gaps, or gangways, in these bulwarks, so that people may go down the ship's side into boats.

At back of stage, the poop-rail, also painted green. A wooden belfry with a bell stands upon the middle of the poop-rail.

On each side of the bell is a ladder leading down to the main deck. Gaps in the poop-rail allow people to reach the poop by these ladders.

Above the deck, sloping from amidships like a tent, is an awning of blue and white baftas. This awning has a flap, which falls at back of stage, hiding the poop from the main deck. On both sides of the stage the awning is secured by stops to guys above the ship's bulwarks.

In the centre of the stage (if the theatre stage is so built) is a hatchway, surrounded by a raised white rim or coaming. This leads down to the cabins.

Behind it is a mast (painted "mast colour") which rises up through the awning.

Round the mast is a square of timbers, like a stout fence. These are the bitts, to which the running rigging is belayed.

Stout ropes and blocks lead along the mast.

Attendants, Sailors, etc., etc., keep always to the starboard side out of respect to POMPEY, *who uses the weather, or honourable side.*

At the rising of the curtain the CAPTAIN *is standing by poop-rail, looking at the men at work forward. The* BOY *holds up the awning so that he can see under it.*

THE CHANTYMAN. [*heard off, amid a click of pawls.*]
Old Pompey lost Pharsalia fight.

THE SAILORS. [*heaving at the forward capstan.*]
Mark well what I do say.

THE CHANTYMAN.
Old Pompey lost Pharsalia fight.

THE SAILORS.
And Cæsar now is the world's delight.
And I'll go no more a-roving
With Pompey the Great.
A-roving. A-roving.
Since roving's been my ru-i-n,
I'll go no more a-roving
With Pompey the Great.

THE MATE. [*from far forward.*] Avast heaving. Walk back. [*Pause.*] Unship your bars.

THE CAPTAIN. That'll do, boy. [BOY *drops awning.*] Now we're riding to a single anchor.

THE BOY. Yes, sir.

THE CAPTAIN. [*kindly.*] D'you know what little port that is yonder?

THE BOY. No, sir.

THE CAPTAIN. That's Pelusium, in Egypt. This is the Nile.

THE BOY. Is this where the King of Egypt lives, sir?

THE CAPTAIN. [*pointing.*] Over yonder. Where all those soldiers are. That's where the King of Egypt is. Young King Ptolemy, whom Pompey sent the letter to, after Cæsar beat him.

THE BOY. Why does Pompey come to him, sir? He's only a boy.

THE CAPTAIN. It was through Pompey he became

king. And there are lots of Pompey's old soldiers yonder. An army of them.

THE BOY. What a lot of ships, sir.

THE CAPTAIN. [*anxiously.*] Ye-es. A lot of ships.

THE BOY. They must be men of war, sir. There's a bugle. Oh, look, sir, at those big galleys. Hark at the bugles. [*Bugle-calls off.*] Is that to call the slaves, sir?

THE CAPTAIN. [*looking under the sharp of his hand.*] Is that a boat putting off from the flagship? That big galley nearest to us?

THE BOY. Yes, sir. Don't they pull well, sir? They're coming to us.

THE CAPTAIN. Quick. Get the red side-ropes rove.

The BOY *reeves side-ropes, which he takes from locker by the gangway.*

THE BOY. [*at his work.*] They're hailing us, sir.

A CRY. Ship ahoy! Ahoy, you!

THE CAPTAIN. Hulloh!

A CRY. What ship is that?

THE CAPTAIN. The "Fortune". From Cyprus.

A CRY. Have you Lord Pompey aboard you?

THE CAPTAIN. Yes. Lord Pompey's aboard us. Down below.

Pause.

THE BOY. They seem to be talking together, sir.

A CRY. When did you leave Cyprus?

THE CAPTAIN. [*humbly.*] At noon, sir, yesterday.

A pause.

A CRY. D'ye hear there? You're not to send any boat ashore.

THE CAPTAIN. Ay, ay, my lord.

THE BOY. They're pulling back to the ship, sir.

THE CAPTAIN. [*testily.*] Quick. Dip our streamer. Dip our streamer, boy. Don't you know enough for that? [*The* BOY *runs aft and dips the streamer.*] Again. Now. Once more. Here. [*He beckons.*] Go below quietly,

and see if Lord Pompey's stirring. [*The* BOY *goes down the hatch. The* CAPTAIN *walks up and down, uneasily looking at the distant ships.*] No. No. I don't like it. [*He shakes his head.*] I wish we were out of it. [*Re-enter* BOY.] Well, lad?

THE BOY. Yes, sir. Lord Pompey's up, sir.

THE CAPTAIN. Ah. [*Kindly.*] You'll be able to tell them, when you get home, that you were shipmates with Pompey the Great.

THE BOY. Yes, sir.

THE CAPTAIN. That's what comes of being a sailor.

THE BOY. Please, sir.

THE CAPTAIN. Yes, boy.

THE BOY. What is the name of that mountain, sir?

THE CAPTAIN. That? That's Mount Cassius. There's a tale about that mountain. Something about a king. Or some one to die there. I forget. Here. What are they doing aboard those galleys?

THE BOY. They are filling full of soldiers. Soldiers are putting off to them in boats.

THE CAPTAIN. [*striking the bell once.*] Mr. Mate, there!

THE MATE. [*below, out of sight.*] Sir.

Enter MATE.

THE CAPTAIN. Oh, Mr. Mate. Here, boy. What are you listening at? Go forward. And if you want to see your mother again, you pray. Pray that King Ptolemy'll let you.

Exit BOY.

The CAPTAIN *speaks intently to the* MATE.

Look here. We're done. Pompey isn't wanted here. Those eunuchs have put the King against him. See those galleys? They're getting ready to sink us. If you see one of them getting under way, cut the cable. Don't wait for orders. Cut the cable, and hoist sail.

THE MATE. I'll make all ready, sir.

THE CAPTAIN. It makes your blood boil, though. A week back they'd have crawled all round Pompey for a chance to kiss his footman's boots. Now they're going to drive him out.

THE MATE. Well, sir. You can't expect gratitude from a king, they say. The world's wide. There's other lands besides Egypt. Egypt's got trouble enough, without Pompey. What did he come here for? That's what I don't see.

THE CAPTAIN. He's had a misfortune. One doesn't know where to turn when one's had a misfortune. And having a wife and that. Very likely he's beside himself, for all he doesn't take on.

THE MATE. He'd ought to have come with his fleet. That would have frightened them. Coming alone like this makes people think he's a beggar. D'you think they'll ram us?

THE CAPTAIN. I don't trust them.

THE MATE. The hands don't trust them, neither.

THE CAPTAIN. Ah! the growlers. What do they say?

THE MATE. They're saying they didn't sign on to be rammed.

THE CAPTAIN. They signed for what I choose.

THE MATE. Yes, sir. They're afraid of the soldiers and that.

THE CAPTAIN. They got sense. If I were Pompey, I'd run for it. A man with a wife like that didn't ought to seek trouble. Well, God send pay-day! Watch the hands and stand by. That's your job.

THE MATE. I'll make all clear, sir. Bosun, there!

BOSUN. [*off.*] Sir?

THE MATE. Overhaul your gear. Have all ready for getting under way.

BOSUN. Have all ready, sir. I will, sir.

Whistle.

THE MATE. [*going.*] There's his steward, sir.

Exit.

THE CAPTAIN. Steward.

PHILIP. [*entering.*] Sir.

THE CAPTAIN. Oh! steward. [PHILIP *approaches.*] Look here, steward. What's Pompey's object in coming here?

PHILIP. He's come to see the King.

THE CAPTAIN. Is he come to ask for shelter?

PHILIP. He's come to raise another army out of all his old soldiers here.

THE CAPTAIN. He won't get any soldiers here. They're all at the wars. The young King's fighting his sister.

PHILIP. That will be patched up. The young King thinks the world of my master. He'll do what Pompey wants.

THE CAPTAIN. He hasn't answered Pompey's letter yet.

PHILIP. No?

THE CAPTAIN. We've been told not to send a boat ashore.

PHILIP. Well, all I know is, the young King longs to honour Pompey. But for Pompey the old King would have died a poor flute-player in Ephesus. You can see for yourself he's coming. There's his state barge at the jetty. Look. They're out on the roofs. There's music.

Enter POMPEY.

THE CAPTAIN. [*unconvinced.*] It may be as you say, steward. Ah.

He starts, salutes, and hastily crosses to the starboard, or lee side.

PHILIP. My lord. Do you know what day it is, my lord?

POMPEY. What day is it?

PHILIP. The day of your triumph, my lord. Your Asian triumph. Thirteen years ago.

POMPEY. Is it so long ago? That was a great day.

PHILIP. Yes, indeed, my lord, I'll never forget that day. We always like to keep it up with a little something among ourselves.

We brought you a few figs, my lord. They're only Cretans. [*He offers figs.*] Just in honour of the day, my lord. If you would accept of them.

POMPEY. [*taking and tasting.*] Thank you, Philip. [*To the* CAPTAIN.] This old servant of mine is always bent on spoiling me.

THE CAPTAIN. Yes, my lord. So I see.

PHILIP. [*going.*] I'm sure I hope to-day will be a great day too, my lord.

Exit PHILIP.

POMPEY. It should be, Philip. [*He lays figs on weather fife-rail.*] Captain!

THE CAPTAIN. Yes, my lord.

POMPEY. Has any one come aboard for me?

THE CAPTAIN. No, my lord.

POMPEY. Thank you.

THE CAPTAIN. Beg pardon, my lord.

POMPEY. Well?

THE CAPTAIN. The flagship has ordered us not to send a boat ashore. I thought I ought to report it, my lord.

POMPEY. Thank you, Captain. A fine fleet here.

THE CAPTAIN. [*meaningly.*] They seem to be getting their crews aboard.

POMPEY. What speed have those galleys?

THE CAPTAIN. Those there, my lord? They might make seventeen. That's with good rowers. And dead calm. And the ships new out of dock. In a wind like this, they wouldn't make more'n about eight. They can't work their oars in a sea-way. [*Pause.*] Now's the time, my lord, if you think of putting to sea. By and by, may be, they'll be able to stop us.

POMPEY. Thank you, Captain.

THE CAPTAIN. I'll report any boat, my lord.

Exit.

Enter CORNELIA.

CORNELIA. Has the King sent?

POMPEY. No.

CORNELIA. No answer?

POMPEY. Not yet.

CORNELIA. Can he know we are here?

POMPEY. Yes. He will come. He will come in person.

CORNELIA. Why has he not come already?

POMPEY. It is early.

CORNELIA. Do you think it is safe to wait? It is ominous. This silence. And all those ships. And the people crowding on the roofs. What if the King be against us?

POMPEY. He cannot be. Do not be afraid.

Enter THEOPHANES.

THEOPHANES. Magnus. They have sent an order. We are not to send a boat ashore. They are plotting something.

POMPEY. If they were plotting, they would ask us to come ashore.

CORNELIA. But why should we not send a boat, if they are friendly?

POMPEY. The King will be coming in person. Then there was a plague in Cyprus. We have not got a clean bill.

CORNELIA. But to be ordered.

THEOPHANES. The Admiral should have come.

POMPEY. This is a merchantman. We are not under Roman colours.

CORNELIA. The Captain there is anxious. Look at him.

THEOPHANES. Ask him.

POMPEY. It is necessary for the world that I see King Ptolemy.

The CAPTAIN *flings down the halliard coil and goes below.*

Strange. Is there any Cassius with Ptolemy?

CORNELIA. Lucius Cassius is dead, surely.

THEOPHANES. There's Quintus Cassius. But he is in Spain.

CORNELIA. Is there not Cneius Cassius? He was legate in one of Cæsar's legions?

POMPEY. Cneius? I thought he was killed?

THEOPHANES. I could find out. Sextus would know.

POMPEY. No. Do not wake him. It is absurd.

CORNELIA. Why do you ask?

POMPEY. When I was in Africa, long ago, an old woman bade me beware of Cassius. I have not thought of it for thirty-four years. An old black hag. Sitting in the sun, there. By the ruins of Carthage. Geminius was riding with me. She hobbled up on a crutch and plucked at my rein. "Young captain. You beware of Cassius. You that ride so proud, beware of Cassius. The sand is falling."

CORNELIA. Why should you think of that now?

POMPEY. Because I am going to victory, as I was then.

The Hands come aft.

THE MATE. [*following.*] Get down off the poop. If you want anything, send a man aft.

1ST HAND. Begging your pardon, your honour. We want to speak.

2ND HAND. We mean to speak.

3RD HAND. We want to know why we're brought here.

4TH HAND. And how long we're to stay here.

2ND HAND. He's been beaten.

4TH HAND. He's got no friends. Our lives are as good to us as his is.

THE MATE. Down off the poop! Down with you! Bosun, there!

Struggling.

POMPEY. What is the matter?

Struggling ends. Pause.

1ST HAND. Begging your pardon, your honour. We wanted to see the Captain.

POMPEY. [*to the* MATE]. What is their grievance?

THE MATE. Some more of their fancies, my lord. [*To the Hands.*] Get over to leeward.

POMPEY. They seem a good lot. What is it?

THE MATE. Oh, the Captain'll soon settle it, my lord. [*To the Hands.*] You wait.

Exit by hatch to find CAPTAIN. *Pause.* POMPEY *takes a half turn, and then speaks.*

POMPEY. [*to Hands.*] Of what do you complain?

1ST HAND. Begging your pardon, your honour. We'd rather wait for the Captain.

POMPEY. What is wrong, though? Tell me.

1ST HAND. I'd rather not say, my lord.

POMPEY. [*takes a half turn, and speaks again.*] Come. What is the trouble? Is it the food? Or the drink?

1ST HAND. Begging your pardon, your honour. We don't like the look of things.

POMPEY. What things?

1ST HAND. Begging your honour's pardon, the ships there.

2ND HAND. They're getting ready to sink us.

POMPEY. Why do you think that?

3RD HAND. You can see the soldiers going aboard them, can't you?

1ST HAND. [*to* 3RD.] Here now. Here.

3RD HAND. [*to* 1ST.] What's wrong? It's the truth. Isn't it?

POMPEY. So they are going aboard to sink us? Why should they sink us?

3RD HAND. Because you're aboard us. [*He stands out.*] You're not wanted here. You're no good to Ptolemy. Cæsar's the man, now, not you. You're no more than what we are.

[*To the Hands.*] And we're to be drowned, are we, because his mightiness that was is worth more dead than alive? He's down. He's no one. He's had fellows die for him for forty years. It's time he learned what it feels like himself.

4TH HAND. That's what I say.

3RD HAND. Come on!

2ND HAND. Man the halliards.

3RD HAND. We'll carry you to Cæsar. And sell you.

POMPEY. Stand back!

You say that the soldiers are coming to sink us?

There are five thousand troops there, and fifty ships.

Are they all coming to sink us?

It seems a large force to sink one ship, manned by such a company.

3RD HAND. Here. Look here!

1ST HAND. } [*to* 3RD.] You'll get us hanged.
2ND HAND. } Give him sheet.
4TH HAND. } How about us? That's what I say.

POMPEY. If I am still so terrible, I must save you. I will go to the flagship yonder. Man your boat.

3RD HAND. You will go to the flagship?

1ST HAND. [*alarmed.*] Look at her. There.

4TH HAND. Look.

2ND HAND. Look at her. She's got her oars out.

1ST HAND. She's coming. We're gone up.

3RD HAND. Then he'll go first.

1ST HAND. [*holding him.*] No, you don't.

Enter CAPTAIN.

THE CAPTAIN. She's coming, my lord. Shall I cut? We might do it, even now.

POMPEY. She is not coming. And if she were, what is death?

THE CAPTAIN. Hard times for the widow, my lord.

POMPEY. [*to the men.*] Leave the ropes.

Do you think the soul can be quenched with water? Or cut with swords? Or burned?

3RD HAND. I know my body can, my lord.

POMPEY. You do well to fear death. Go to your place. [*Musingly.*] If death can crush what comprehends heaven? Why! We are in a bad way, Captain.

The Hands file off, quietly. POMPEY *looks down on the main deck. The* CAPTAIN *stands apart anxiously watching the flagship.* CORNELIA *and* THEOPHANES *eye each other.*

CORNELIA. Is the flagship coming?

THEOPHANES. She is ready to come.

CORNELIA. To sink us?

THEOPHANES. She could sink us.

CORNELIA. I cannot bear this.

POMPEY *turning, walks towards them.*

THEOPHANES. We ought to have gone to our fleet. We're helpless like this.

CORNELIA. Magnus. This isn't what we planned.

POMPEY. Let me reassure you. Egypt is friendly to me.

I saved her independence. I made the elder Ptolemy King. The young King is my ward, bound to me by intimate ties. Those troops are veterans of my Asian Army.

THEOPHANES. The young King's at his wits' end with civil war. How can he begin a war with Cæsar?

CORNELIA. [*bitterly.*] And we are suppliants to him. We Romans. To whom they should strike their flags. [*After a pause, quickly.*] See if they refuse to salute us.

THEOPHANES. We should know what to expect then.

CORNELIA. Oh, let us be certain. Hoist your colours.

POMPEY. It is not time yet. I will hoist them when the watch ends.

THE CAPTAIN. One bell, my lord.

POMPEY. The watch is nearly out?

THE CAPTAIN. Nearly, my lord. Will you hoist any colours, my lord?

POMPEY. My consular colours.

THE CAPTAIN. I'm only a merchantman, my lord. If they should refuse to salute, my lord?

POMPEY. You will go alongside the flagship there, and order her to salute.

THE CAPTAIN. [*going*.] I am all ready to get under way, my lord. Bosun, there! Stand by. Mr. Mate. Boy, there!

He goes to the break of the poop and looks down on main deck.

Are your colours bent on, Centurion?

CENTURION. [*off*.] Tell him, yes.

BOY. [*off*.] All ready to hoist, sir.

THE CAPTAIN. [*coming to* POMPEY.] All ready, my lord. Will you make eight bells, my lord?

POMPEY. When it is time.

He paces leisurely.

Theophanes. Have you your tables?

THEOPHANES. Yes.

POMPEY. I shall want you to take notes.

[*To* CORNELIA.] What was that passage about the soul? We were reading it that day at Alba, when the women brought you their first-fruits? Our first year. We were in the garden. You were reading to me. There was a verse about the soul.

CORNELIA. The upright soul is safe?

POMPEY. Yes. That was the verse. I have always loved Alba. I was there as a child. We were happy there, that year.

CORNELIA. Very happy. And that day, the doves

came, picking the spilled grain. And at night there was a moon.

POMPEY. All the quiet valley. And the owls were calling. Those little grey owls. Make eight bells, Captain.

The CAPTAIN *makes it. The Bosun pipes the colours up.*

THE CAPTAIN. Not so fast there, boy.

Eight bells is echoed over the harbour from ship to ship. POMPEY *and* THEOPHANES *raise their right hands. Perhaps* CORNELIA *ought to veil.*

THEOPHANES. The flagship is hoisting her ensign.

Bugles off.

CORNELIA. Will she salute? Will she salute? There.

THEOPHANES. There. She dips it.

CORNELIA. They all salute.

THEOPHANES. Then we are safe.

POMPEY. That is settled, then. I am to be received. Now to work.

Captain, there.

THE CAPTAIN. I beg pardon, my lord, but there is a boat coming towards us.

POMPEY. What do you make of her?

THE CAPTAIN. They pull very badly, my lord. They pull like soldiers.

POMPEY. They are soldiers. I see the gleam of armour.

THEOPHANES. Seven soldiers.

THE CAPTAIN. Am I to let them alongside, my lord?

POMPEY. Wait.

CORNELIA. What can they be coming for?

POMPEY. Can the King have sent her?

THEOPHANES. Sent a fishing boat like that, Cneius, to take you ashore?

CORNELIA. You cannot go in that boat.

THEOPHANES. Magnus. There is some treachery.

CORNELIA. Cneius. It is a dreadful risk, to stay.

POMPEY. It is necessary. You would rather I ran the risk than let the world become—what it will become.

CORNELIA. Much rather.

POMPEY. You will understand, then.

THE CAPTAIN. They are hailing, my lord. Would the lady go below a little? They might fling a dart on board.

CORNELIA. The air is fresher here.

SEPTIMIUS. [*off.*] Hail! Pompey. Imperator.

THE CAPTAIN. We could still run for it, my lord.

POMPEY. We must not show that we mistrust them.

SEPTIMIUS. [*off.*] Hail, Pompey, Imperator!

POMPEY. Have your men ready to salute.

SEPTIMIUS. [*off.*] In bow.

CORNELIA. Cneius. Cneius.

POMPEY. There is no danger. Have you the little book with my speech to Ptolemy?

CORNELIA. Here it is.

SEPTIMIUS. [*off.*] Toss your starboard oars. Way enough.

POMPEY. Company there. Salute.

THE CAPTAIN. The call, there.

Enter SEPTIMIUS, *a Roman military tribune, with* ACHILLAS EGYPTIAN, *both in military dress. The Bosun pipes the side for each of them.*

POMPEY. [*advancing.*] You come from King Ptolemy?

SEPTIMIUS *salutes,* ACHILLAS *bows.*

ACHILLAS. From King Ptolemy. He send you royal greeting.

POMPEY. He wishes to see me?

ACHILLAS. He wish to see you. To be your friend.

POMPEY. Shall I bring the ship alongside the quay there?

ACHILLAS. There is much mud and sandbanks. There would be no water for this galley. You have to take a boat.

POMPEY. [*glancing at ships.*] Your fleet is getting under way here?

ACHILLAS. [*shrugging his shoulders.*] Ah? Will you come into my boat?

POMPEY. She is not a very handsome boat.

ACHILLAS. No? It is bad weather sometimes.

POMPEY. [*to* SEPTIMIUS.] I think I should know you, my friend. You and I have served together?

SEPTIMIUS *nods, but does not answer.*

Where was it? I know your face.

No answer.

A long time ago. Eighteen years ago. In the war against the pirates? [*Pause.*] Was it not?

No answer.

You commanded a company in my guard. [*Pause.*] You did something? You burnt a ship one night? You paddled out alone and set fire to her? I remember you. I gave you a sword. You are wearing it now.

SEPTIMIUS. [*turning to the boat, muttering to himself.*] I'm as good a man as you are.

ACHILLAS. You come in my little boat. I take you to the King. The King is your friend. Lovely lady, the King want to see him.

CORNELIA. Yes.

POMPEY. I will follow you. Go down into the boat.

ACHILLAS, *bowing, goes to gangway, where he stands, looking aft.*

POMPEY. Now.

THEOPHANES. Magnus. You mustn't go.

CORNELIA. Cneius. Cneius. What do they mean?

THEOPHANES. You mustn't go, Magnus.

POMPEY. My beloved! You must stay here. You must not come.

CORNELIA. My darling! What are they going to do?

POMPEY. What God wills.

Theophanes. If this is the end, I wish it to be the end.

Those arrangements of the fleet. Cancel them. You understand. Go to Cato. Tell Cato to submit to Cæsar. War will only mean more bloodshed. He cannot stand against Cæsar. I could have

Scipio's daughter. Make your father submit to Cæsar. Keep my sons out of it. Tell them. End the war. Life is very grand, but there is something behind it. Something which strikes a mean. I had my hand on it. Come. Courage. These are Egyptians. [*To* CORNELIA.]

Captain. You must sail. Stand by.

What else is there? Asia. Theophanes. Asia must submit. Send to the Kings. The world must make what terms it can. This is all in the event. If this is the end. You understand? If not, you know my orders.

Philip. Scythes. Cotta. Go down into the boat.

PHILIP. My lord. I've served you a long time, my lord.

POMPEY. What is it, Philip?

COTTA *and* SCYTHES *go.*

PHILIP. My lord. My old, beloved lord.

POMPEY. Why, Philip. We are the only ones left. We are two old Sulla's men. Have you my cloak in the boat?

PHILIP. Forty years, my lord.

POMPEY. The broidered one. [*To* CORNELIA.] Your gift. Come. Carry it down, man.

PHILIP. I wish it was to begin all over again.

Exit.

ACHILLAS. Will you come into the boat? The King is waiting.

CORNELIA. Cneius. My husband. My husband.

POMPEY. God only lends us.

If the King keep faith We shall have time. Time for what we must imagine. If not. We know our love. The gods treasure you.

He goes towards gangway.

Remember, Captain.

Theophanes. If I fail, you must warn Lentulus.

He goes to gangway. The Bosun starts to pipe the side. POMPEY *turns to the* BOY. *Bosun stops his pipe.* POMPEY *takes figs from fife-rail and gives them to the* BOY.

Can you eat figs ?

The BOY *mumbles.*

What is your name ?

The BOY *bursts into tears.*

ACHILLAS. [*at gangway.*] Give me your hand. I take your hand down.

POMPEY. [*pausing in the gangway and looking back. Sadly. To* THEOPHANES.]

" A brave man enters court of his free will
Even though the judge may bind him when he enters."

He goes down. The Bosun pipes the side.

SEPTIMIUS. [*coldly.*] Back your port oars. Shove off. Give way together.

THE CAPTAIN. [*softly to* MATE.] Go on there. Man your halliards.

THE MATE. Take the turns off. Stretch it along. Softly now. Stand by.

The Seamen, coming behind CORNELIA, *man the halliards. The Chantyman stands on the bitts. All look after the boat.*

THE CHANTYMAN. There's a lot of troops ashore.

THE MATE. S's't.

CORNELIA. They are not talking to him.

THEOPHANES. He is reading his speech. [*Pause.*] He organises everything. Cæsar improvises.

CORNELIA. There they go out of the sun.

THEOPHANES. The hill casts a long shadow.

CORNELIA. What is the name of the hill ?

THE CAPTAIN. Mount Cassius, lady.

THEOPHANES. [*quickly.*] They are coming with banners. Look.

CORNELIA. He is safe.

THEOPHANES. There comes the King. Hark! Trumpets. They're saluting. He is standing up to land.

CORNELIA. Ah! Swords. He is stabbed.

THEOPHANES. Ah! you gods. You gods!

CORNELIA. Oh! He is killed! He is killed! He is killed!

She collapses.

THEOPHANES. [*covering his eyes.*] The devils! The devils!

THE MATE. They stabbed him in the back.

ANTISTIA. It's ebb-tide now, my beauty.

THE CAPTAIN. [*yelling.*] Cut the cable.

Chopping forward.

A VOICE. All gone, the cable.

THE MATE. Let fall.

A VOICE. All gone.

THE MATE. Sheet home. Hoist away.

THE MEN. Ho.

They haul.

THE CHANTYMAN. Away ho!

The MEN *haul.*

He intones in a clear loud voice. The Seamen sing the chorus, hauling.

This song is sung like an ordinary halliard chanty. The chorus is to the tune of the old chanty of "Hanging Johnny." The solo will be intoned clearly, without tune. It goes to fast time, the chorus starting almost before the soloist ends his line. The MEN *must haul twice, in the proper manner, in each chorus.*

THE CHANTYMAN.

Kneel to the beautiful women who bear us this strange brave fruit.

THE MEN. Away, i-oh.

THE CHANTYMAN.

Man with his soul so noble: man half god and half brute.

THE MEN. So away, i-oh.

THE CHANTYMAN.

Women bear him in pain that he may bring them tears.

CHORUS.

THE CHANTYMAN.

He is a king on earth, he rules for a term of years.

CHORUS.

THE CHANTYMAN.

And the conqueror's prize is dust and lost endeavour.

CHORUS.

THE CHANTYMAN.

And the beaten man becomes a story for ever.

CHORUS.

THE CHANTYMAN.

For the gods employ strange means to bring their will to be.

CHORUS.

THE CHANTYMAN.

We are in the wise gods' hands and more we cannot see.

CHORUS. So away, i-oh.

A VOICE. High enough.

THE MATE. Lie to. [*The Seamen lay to the fall.*] Make fast.

Coil up.

A VOICE. All clear to seaward.

THE CAPTAIN. Pipe down.

The Bosun pipes the belay.

CURTAIN

NOTES

ON THE APPEARANCE OF POMPEY

PORTRAITS exist of Cneius Pompeius Magnus. The most important of these is a marble bust at Copenhagen. Several likenesses are to be found on the gold and silver coins struck by his son, Sextus, in Spain. Plutarch says of him that, " being come to man's state, there appeared in his gesture and behaviour a grave and princely majesty. His hair also stood a little upright, and the cast and soft moving of his eyes had a certain resemblance (as they said) of the statues and images of Alexander the Great." This resemblance may still be traced.

At the time of his murder he was fifty-eight years old, a powerful, very active man, in the prime of life. His bust, evidently done towards the end of his life, shows that his hair, which was thick, coarse, and worn rather long, still tended to stand a little upright. The head is of great breadth at the eyes. The brow is low and lined with three deep lines of wrinkles going right across it in irregular M shape. The eyebrows are well marked : the supra-orbital ridge is heavy. The nose is full and strong, with the broad base which is so good an index of intellectual power. The septum is of great breadth. The mouth is of that kindly tightness which one sees in the portraits of some of our Admirals. Below the mouth is a deep horizontal dent. The chin is not cloven. The face is lined a good deal. A deep straight wrinkle runs from each side of the nose to the puckered angles of the mouth. The eyes are crows-footed. There are no indications as to the colour of the hair and eyes. The shape of the head suggests the brown or fair type of man. At the time of his death he was perhaps grizzled.

No known portrait exists of any of the other characters. Metellus came of a family once distinguished for pointed noses. Domitius of a family once famed for red hair. Cornelia was famous for a grave and gentle beauty. She was young, though already a widow, when Pompey married her, a few months before the civil trouble began.

ON THE FATE OF THE PERSONS IN THIS TRAGEDY

Philip. After religiously burning his master's body on the sea-shore, disappears from history.

Metellus Scipio. Fled from Pharsalia to Africa, where he carried on the war until 46 B.C., when he was defeated by Cæsar at Thapsus. Flying from Africa by sea, in bad weather, he was forced to put into the port of Hippo, where one of Cæsar's fleets lay at anchor. A battle followed. He is said to have drowned himself shortly before his ship was sunk.

Cn. Pompeius Theophanes. Returned to Italy, and was pardoned by Cæsar. He attained great fame as a writer. After his death the Lesbians paid him divine honours. His son held office under Augustus.

Marcus Cato. After Pharsalia, joined Scipio in Africa, and held command under him. He killed himself in Utica, shortly after the battle of Thapsus, so that he might not live to see the final extinction of liberty. His son was killed at Philippi, " valiantly fighting against Augustus," four years later.

Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus. Was killed (some say by Mark Antony) either in the battle, or in the route, of Pharsalia, at which he commanded the great brigade of horse, on the left of Pompey's army.

Marcus Acilius Glabrio. Continued in Cæsar's service, and rose to be governor of Achaia.

Lucius Lucceius. Returned to Rome, and received Cæsar's pardon. He was praised by Cicero for the excellence of his historical writings.

Lucius Afranius. After Pharsalia, joined Scipio in Africa, and held command under him till the battle of Thapsus. While riding through Mauretania, on his way to Spain, after that disaster, he was ambushed and taken by Cæsar's lieutenant, P. Sitius. A few days later, the troops of Sitius killed him in a camp riot.

Lentulus Spinther. After Pharsalia, fled to Rhodes, where he was refused permission to land. He set sail again " much against his will," and either " perished ingloriously " or disappeared from history.

Achillas Egyptian. Was killed by Arsinöe (Ptolemy's sister) and the eunuch Ganymed in the year after Pompey's murder.

ON THE HOUSE OF POMPEY, AFTER THE MURDER

Cornelia. After seeing her husband killed, fled to Cyrene, and thence to Rome, where, in time, Pompey's ashes were brought to

her. She is said to have buried them " in a town of hers by the city of Alba," near Rome.

Cn. Pompeius Magnus, the Triumvir's eldest son, by his third wife, Mucia, held Corcyra for a time, showing courage and bold strategic ideas. On hearing of his father's death, he went to Spain, where he raised a great army. He was defeated at the bloody battle of Munda, in the year 45. Soon after the battle he was betrayed, taken and killed. His head was carried to Seville and exposed there to the public gaze.

Sextus Pompeius Magnus. The younger son (also by Mucia) continued the war in Africa, with Cato's party, till after the battle of Thapsus. He then joined his brother in Spain. After Cæsar's murder, he was proscribed by Octavian, and took the seas, with a fleet, burning, sinking and intercepting commerce, till Octavian came to terms. On the recommencement of war between them, his fleet was beaten by Octavian's fleet under Agrippa. After trying vainly to beat up a force in Asia, he was taken and put to death at Miletus (probably by the order of Mark Antony) in the year 35. He left a daughter whose fate is uncertain. She was with him in Asia in 36.

Pompeia. The daughter (also by Mucia) married Faustus, the son of Sulla, who was killed with Afranius in the mutiny of the troops of P. Sitius, in Africa in 46. She afterwards married L. Cornelius Cinna. It is not known when she died, but it is certain that she predeceased her brother Sextus. She had a son by Cornelius Cinna, who came to be Consul in A.D. 5. What became of her children by Faustus is not known.

And all their passionate hearts are dust,
And dust the great idea that burned
In various flames of love and lust
Till the world's brain was turned.

God, moving darkly in men's brains,
Using their passions as His tool,
Brings freedom with a tyrant's chains
And wisdom with the fool.

Blindly and bloodily we drift,
Our interests clog our hearts with dreams.
God make my brooding mind a rift
Through which a meaning gleams.

Feb. 8, 1908. *July* 5, 1909.

MARY BROOME

ALLAN MONKHOUSE

PLAYS by ALLAN MONKHOUSE

MARY BROOME.

(Published by Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd., 1911.)

THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE.

First performed at the Liverpool Repertory Theatre, November 1912. (Same publishers, 1913.)

FOUR TRAGEDIES.

(Published by Duckworth & Co., 1913) :—

The Hayling Family : first performed by the Play Actors, October 1924.

The Stricklands : performed by two Dramatic Societies in America.

Resentment : produced by B. Iden Payne, Sheffield; October 1912.

Reaping the Whirlwind : produced by Miss Horniman, Manchester, September 1908.

WAR PLAYS.

(Published by Constable & Co., 1916) :—

Shamed Life.

Night Watches.

The Choice : produced by Miss Horniman, Manchester, June 1910.

THE CONQUERING HERO.

First performed by the Play Actors, March 1924 (subsequently at the Queen's and St. Martin's Theatres). (Published by Benn Brothers, 1923.)

FIRST BLOOD.

First performed by the Stockport Garrick Society, April 1925. (Same publishers.)

THE GRAND CHAM'S DIAMOND.

First performed at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, September 1918. (Published by Gowans & Gray, Glasgow, 1924 ; also in "One-Act Plays of To-day," Harrap & Co., Ltd., 1924.)

MARY BROOME

was first produced by Miss Horniman's Company at the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester, on October 9, 1911, with the following cast:

SHEILA RAY	Edyth Goodall.
ADA TIMBRELL	Hilda Bruce Potter.
EDGAR TIMBRELL	Herbert Lomas.
MARY BROOME	Irene Rooke.
LEONARD TIMBRELL	Milton Rosmer.
MRS. TIMBRELL	Ada King.
EDWARD TIMBRELL	Charles Bibby.
Maid	Doris Bateman.
MR. PENDLETON	Cecil Brooking.
MRS. PENDLETON	Louise Holbrook.
MRS. GREAVES	Hilda Davies.
JOHN BROOME	Edward Landor.
MRS. BROOME	Muriel Pratt.

The Play produced by STANLEY DREWITT.

All applications for permission to perform this play should be made to the Author, in the care of the Publishers.

MARY BROOME

ACT I

The Drawing-room in a biggish suburban villa—The furniture, etc., are in middling taste. EDGAR TIMBRELL, *an ordinary young man of nearly thirty in neat tweeds, is sprawling self-consciously on the sofa.* ADA *and* SHEILA *are opening a parcel. They are the ordinary middle-class young women who might develop in all manner of unexpected ways and usually do not.*

SHEILA. Come and look, Edgar.

ADA. He's only pretending not to care.

SHEILA. Lend me your knife. [*She takes it from him and cuts the string.*] I brought this over without opening it just to let you see it too.

EDGAR. For Heaven's sake remember who sent them all.

SHEILA. It's all right. Ada's keeping a list.

EDGAR. Well, get all the fun out of it you can. You won't often have the chance of being married.

SHEILA. [*opening the parcel.*] Oh! how nice! What do you mean, Edgar? I've had lots of chances.

EDGAR. You can't go on having them now, though.

ADA. Let me see, Sheila.

SHEILA. No, that's why I want everything to be nice. Instead of all those chances I want one delightful reality. A sweet little tea-caddy; that's two; the other was bigger. One delightful reality, Edgar. You've got to see to that.

EDGAR. Oh! I'll make a jolly good husband.

SHEILA. I wasn't thinking of that. I was only thinking

of the wedding. One thing at a time. I want to have the prettiest wedding that ever was. Something that I can look back to. No hitches and stupidities and uglinesses.

ADA. Some people like Indian tea. You could have Indian tea in that one.

Enter MARY BROOME, *the housemaid. She is a comely young woman in the housemaid's usual afternoon dress and with the housemaid's usual self-possession.*

MARY. A parcel for you, sir.

EDGAR. Thank you. Will you put it down—anywhere.

ADA. Another present! No.

EDGAR. Only my new silk hat.

SHEILA. Hurrah! That's right.

MARY *puts the box on a chair and is going out when* EDGAR *speaks.*

EDGAR. Er—is Mr. Leonard in, do you know?

MARY. I think he went upstairs, sir.

ADA. What do you want with him?

SHEILA. Let's see you in the new hat.

EDGAR. It's just a notion I had. I'm afraid of forgetting. I wonder if he's done anything about clothes and things; he's fearfully casual.

MARY. Must I—? Do you want me, sir?

EDGAR. No, I think not, thank you.

She goes out.

SHEILA. The new hat. The new hat. How jolly!

She begins to open the box.

ADA. You'd better speak to him while you think about it.

EDGAR. He's no good at ceremonial clothes. I believe he's only got a frock coat.

SHEILA. Oh! don't let us have a frock coat. I should never forget it.

ADA. I'll go for him. I'll fetch him.

SHEILA. Yes, do, Ada. No time like the present. [ADA *goes out.*] Edgar, I wish Leonard wasn't coming to the wedding.

EDGAR. But, my dear girl—

SHEILA. Oh! I know. I know. Of course he must be best man. It would be all wrong if he wasn't, but somehow he's so queer and different and I don't feel safe with him and I don't know what he'll do or say. Of course he can be charming. I think he's a flirt. You always know when he's in the room.

EDGAR. Of course these artist people are very self-conscious and assertive and—

SHEILA. But he's not assertive. He's—he's seductive. And he makes fun of things.

EDGAR. No harm in that.

SHEILA. Yes, there is. He makes fun of the wrong things. Why do you call him an artist, Edgar? He's not one.

EDGAR. Oh! he's artistic—literary and so on— It's all the same.

SHEILA. But he's a barrister, isn't he?

EDGAR. Oh! yes, of sorts. He never had a brief.

SHEILA. Then how does he—I mean how does he get an income? Why doesn't he go into the business, too?

EDGAR. Oh! ho! Leonard in the business! No. The old Pater prefers to pay him a handsome allowance to keep out. Besides, Leonard makes about five shillings a month by literature.

SHEILA. How horrid to be quite dependent like that! Why do you let him?

EDGAR. Bless you! I don't want him in the business. It suits me well enough. Hullo! He's coming.

Enter ADA *and* LEONARD. LEONARD *is rather younger than* EDGAR; *a handsome young man with an air of detachment. His manners are rather*

pleasantly impudent and now disguise some harassment. He is rather carefully dressed in what appears to be a careless way.

LEONARD. I'm wanted? Very much honoured I'm sure. My dear Sheila, I kiss your hands.

SHEILA. You may shake one if you like.

He tries to kiss it and she snatches it away.

LEONARD. What a pity.

SHEILA. Don't be so stupid.

LEONARD. You keep disappointing me. We should have done it very well.

ADA. Don't be absurd, Leonard.

EDGAR. He will play the fool.

LEONARD. Well, well. Now to business. About this wedding. Does the best man kiss the bride?

SHEILA. } [*Together.*] { Of course not. Those vulgarities are out of date.
EDGAR. } { Deuce take it, Leonard!

LEONARD. I only want to know. I want to play my part like an English gentleman. Kissing in public—except the hand—is an atrocity, but if it has to be done it should be done firmly. No hesitations, no scrimmages. In fact there should always be a rehearsal. Very well. No kissing. Now about gloves—

EDGAR. Yes, what are you going to wear, Leonard?

LEONARD. I shall wear a grey morning coat, trousers of about the same colour but exquisitely striped, white waistcoat, grey hat with narrow black band, an orchid—the best that money can buy—if any one will lend me the money—

EDGAR. Here, I say—

LEONARD. I know what you are going to say—that I ought just to dress up to you.

SHEILA. Oh! he won't be sensible. I hope you won't go and spoil things.

LEONARD. Spoil things? [*He reflects for a moment.*]

Confess that you would like me to go away and telegraph that I can't come to the wedding.

SHEILA. Oh! No. But I want everything to be nice.

EDGAR. Do the thing properly, Leonard.

LEONARD. Properly! I want to do things more than properly. I meant to write an ode on the marriage morning. I'm afraid I shan't have time for more than a sonnet. I've made a start. I've got a first line:

"The jocund sun has tinged the mountain tops"—

Good word "jocund." The difficulty is to get three good rhymes to tops. Of course it might be crest—mountain crest—but I don't like it. It's poetical. That's the worst of poetry nowadays; you mustn't use poetical words.

EDGAR. There's no getting any sense out of you, but look here: Sheila and I want you to be decent over this affair. Just get the right sort of thing and a new hat, won't you? I'll tell you what to get if you like.

LEONARD. My dear fellow, I have the sense of clothes.

SHEILA. He knows well enough, Edgar.

EDGAR. Come on then. Is mother downstairs?

ADA. I think so. Leonard, you might open the window; the room's close.

LEONARD. Now, Ada, you know it's not my business to open the window. I always leave this kind of thing to experts.

ADA. Well, ring for Mary.

LEONARD. Oh! no. I'll do it. [*He goes rather hastily to open the window. The others go out. He stands looking out of the window.* MARY BROOME *enters dubiously. She looks round the room and presently sees him. She advances quickly towards him and he turns round.*]

LEONARD. Oh! I say!

MARY. You're packing a bag. What for? You can't be going away?

LEONARD. Now you mustn't stop here. Any one may come in.

MARY. After what I told you, you're going away? You couldn't do that.

LEONARD. And, look here! My mother's talking about having missed a photograph—my photograph. You've never, surely—

MARY. Yes, I took it.

LEONARD. Oh! but that's madness.

MARY. I thought I had a right to it.

LEONARD. Well, get away, that's a good girl. We'll talk about things again.

MARY. How can you go away? Why are you packing your bag?

LEONARD. You've been spying in my room.

MARY. You know I have to go into your room.

LEONARD. Of course. I beg your pardon. Yes, I am going away for two days.

MARY. There were ten shirts laid out.

LEONARD. I'm lying. Yes. We can't talk here. Who's this? Take care. [*As* MRS. TIMBRELL *enters he continues:*] Well, I shall be much obliged if you will. The brown boots—Yes. More polish—I've really been quite ashamed of them. Well, mother? [*He turns from* MARY *with an air of dismissal.* MARY *moves away but stops as* MRS. TIMBRELL *occupies the doorway.* MRS. TIMBRELL *is startled rather than surprised. She holds a small framed photograph in her hand.*]

MRS. TIMBRELL. [*to* LEONARD.] I've found your photograph.

MARY. You have no right in my room.

MRS. TIMBRELL. [*greatly agitated.*] Leonard, I can't believe—Leonard—

She has advanced into the room having closed the door. It opens and MR. TIMBRELL *enters gaily with* SHEILA *on his arm. He is a rather precise man*

condescending to geniality, obviously righteous according to his lights and obstinately trustful of them. MRS. TIMBRELL'S *general attitude to him is a rather tired acquiescence which sometimes stops short of submission.* ADA *and* EDGAR *follow closely.*

TIMBRELL. Let's see the latest, then. Where's the sweetly pretty tea-caddy? [*To* MRS. TIMBRELL.] Have you seen it, my dear? [*His speech peters out as he sees his wife's face and the attitudes of the group of whom* LEONARD *alone attempts to maintain an ordinary appearance.*] Why! What's the matter?

LEONARD. You'd better let Mary go, mother. You can't scold her in public like this. Besides it was only a trifle.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I must know.

TIMBRELL. What! What! A scolding? What have you been doing, Mary? Come, come. Never mind. Run away. Run away. I'll speak up for you, Mary.

MARY. [*to* LEONARD.] Must I go?

LEONARD. I suppose so. Certainly.

MARY. Will you speak up for me?

TIMBRELL. What's this? What's this? [MARY *makes for the door,* SHEILA *standing aside hastily.*] Stop a bit. Stop a bit. [*There is a pause and* TIMBRELL *looks at* LEONARD *and then at his wife.*] What's that in your hand? [MRS. TIMBRELL *hesitates, but as her husband waits she turns the photograph towards him.*] Leonard's photograph? The one you lost? Well, where was it?

LEONARD. I think you might allow Mary to go.

TIMBRELL. Where was it? [*He speaks to his wife but she is silent. He looks at* MARY.]

MARY. It was in my room.

EDGAR. [*To* ADA.] You and Sheila had better go.

TIMBRELL. [*half turning to* EDGAR.] Silence. Why was it in your room? [SHEILA *and* ADA *have moved*

toward the door. They remain, possessed with a natural and intense curiosity.]

MARY. I had the right to it if any one had.

TIMBRELL. You took it from his mother's room?

MARY. [*after a very short pause.*] Well, I shall be a mother soon.

TIMBRELL *sits down and sinks back in the chair.*

SHEILA *and* ADA *go out quietly.*

MRS. TIMBRELL. [*to* MARY.] Sit down, my dear.

EDGAR *gives* MARY *a chair. She sits down.*

MARY. Thank you, ma'am.

LEONARD. [*to himself or the world.*] Beautiful. Beautiful.

TIMBRELL. [*starting.*] What!

LEONARD. I said it was beautiful.

TIMBRELL. What's beautiful?

LEONARD. Mary and my mother; and you, if you like. The whole thing.

TIMBRELL. What does he mean?

EDGAR. Is your share in it beautiful, too?

LEONARD. That doesn't matter. I see it all.

TIMBRELL. [*to* MARY.] What are you stopping here for? Have you no sense of shame? [MARY *stands up.*] I don't want to be hard on you. I daresay you're less to blame than he is. I don't know. It's a disgraceful affair. Disgraceful. Now, be off. Be off. Please go.

MARY. But I want to hear what he says.

TIMBRELL. Yes. So do I.

LEONARD. The devil of it is that I say anything. If you get me into a fix I just want to get out of it.

TIMBRELL. That's your character, is it?

LEONARD. From your point of view, sir, I'm afraid I'm a bad lot.

TIMBRELL. What good are you to anybody? Why were you born?

LEONARD. That's your concern, sir.

TIMBRELL. Don't bandy words with me. You should be down on your knees asking pardon of this poor girl, of your mother, of your God. What are such things to you?

LEONARD. I'm extremely sorry. Of course I've no defence. I should have to go back to some kind of first principles and even then it'd be a bit shaky I daresay. Mother, it's horrible for you. I see that.

TIMBRELL. But have you nothing to say? Do you think this is adequate? What are you going to do? What's your way out?

LEONARD. You have a better head than I have, sir, for these practical matters.

TIMBRELL. You are a callous and impudent fellow. [*To* MARY.] What have you got to say?

MARY. I can't make out how much he cares.

LEONARD. [*to* MARY.] I don't know what to say to you. I can't talk to you in public. This is a new aspect of the thing entirely. What's the use of telling you I'm sorry?

MARY. Are you sorry?

LEONARD. Well, yes.

EDGAR. Is the beauty of the scene waning?

LEONARD. [*to* EDGAR.] You'll want another best man. Well, Sheila didn't want me.

EDGAR. Don't speak of Sheila here.

LEONARD. Why not?

EDGAR. Your own sense of decency might tell you.

LEONARD. [*passionately*.] In all my life I never said anything as bad as that. Never anything as unkind, as evil, as abominable.

EDGAR. Why, what do you mean?

LEONARD. To insult her now!

EDGAR. You're a fine fellow to talk of—

TIMBRELL. Silence. This is no time for such bickering. [*To* MARY.] Just leave the room.

LEONARD. Don't speak to her like that.

TIMBRELL. Are you addressing me?

LEONARD. Yes. You must treat her well.

TIMBRELL. Treat her!—What are you to talk of treating her well? Besides, I am treating her well. I think she will agree that I have shown the greatest forbearance. A fellow who has an intrigue with a servant and then—

LEONARD. A servant!

TIMBRELL. What is she?

LEONARD. You make these distinctions.

TIMBRELL. What does the fellow mean?

LEONARD. You'd hardly believe it, but I feel a kind of moral exaltation. [EDGAR *laughs*.] Oh! yes, Edgar, I know your vast superiority but in this you're despicable through and through—all of you. No, mother was beautifully kind for a moment just now. She asked Mary to sit down. [*Impetuously*.] Do you like staying here, Mary? Why don't you go?

MARY. I want to hear what you say.

LEONARD. I've wronged you, as the saying is, but I don't wrong you with every instinct, at every hour of the day. After all, I'm the only member of this family that's achieved any kind of human relationship with you. To me you're not a servant. Listen to this—listen to Shakespeare: [*He declaims*.]

> "Why sweat they under burdens? Let their beds
> Be made as soft as yours, and let their palates
> Be season'd with such viands. You will answer,
> The slaves are ours."

I suppose that practically I'm as bad as any of you. It's just the idea.

MARY. I don't understand what he's talking about.

TIMBRELL. Nor anybody else.

LEONARD. Mary lives in the kitchen and the attic; Mary lives on poorer food than ours when it isn't our

leavings; the sheets on Mary's bed are coarser than ours—

TIMBRELL. Silence, sir!

EDGAR. Shameful!

MRS. TIMBRELL. What would you have us do?

MARY. I'm making no complaint, ma'am.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Not of him?

MARY. I was as bad as him.

LEONARD. She is not bad. She can't be bad. Any one can see that who looks at her.

MARY. Yes, I've acted bad. I couldn't face—I could never face— [*Her voice catches.* MRS. TIMBRELL *crosses over to her.*]

MRS. TIMBRELL. Come with me. You've been here long enough.

LEONARD. Go with my mother, Mary.

MARY. I can't make you out. You talk so fine and yet—

MRS. TIMBRELL. Come.

MARY. [*going, turns and says to* LEONARD.] Why were you going away?

TIMBRELL. Going away?

MARY. He was packing his things.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Why, Leonard?

LEONARD. What a brute I am.

MRS. TIMBRELL. You were going away?

LEONARD. That's the kind of beast I am.

TIMBRELL. I don't quite understand this. You were going away? Where? Why?

LEONARD. Where doesn't matter.

TIMBRELL. Why were you going?

LEONARD. I wanted to get out of it.

MRS. TIMBRELL. You didn't know. You didn't understand.

LEONARD. Yes, I did. She told me.

MRS. TIMBRELL. But, Leonard—

TIMBRELL. What! What! You were running away? You knew—you knew everything?

LEONARD. Yes, I did.

TIMBRELL. Shameful! Monstrous!

LEONARD. I thought it the most sensible thing to do. I know it looks bad.

TIMBRELL. He amazes me. I can't grasp it. What a coward! What an infamous coward! Had you no thought at all for this unfortunate girl? You never thought of any kind of reparation, I suppose? Reparation! By Heaven!— [*He stops for a moment, considering, and then goes on but with something working in his mind.*] Had you no consideration for your mother—for any of us? Don't you see—don't you understand?

LEONARD. I think I see a bit clearer than you do. As to Mary, I didn't see how I could help her. Frankly, I didn't. I knew you'd be as decent to her as any one could. I've not a penny. I can't earn a penny. I'd have written to my mother to explain. It wouldn't have been pleasant, but less disagreeable for her than this, I think.

EDGAR. How would you go away without a penny?

LEONARD. Never mind. Yes. You shall know. I meant to take some of mother's housekeeping money. I know where she keeps it.

EDGAR. You'd have stolen it?

LEONARD. I should have written to explain—and to ask for some more.

EDGAR. You're the limit.

LEONARD. You're damned small-minded. Don't bother us. [*To his father.*] I quite understand your point of view, sir.

TIMBRELL. Oh! do you? You understand me very thoroughly, don't you?

LEONARD. You see I have far more faith in your practical wisdom than in my own. I'm in a mess. You'll

say I ought to stop and face the music. My point is that it does no good. And then there was that infernal wedding of Edgar's; I had to get out of that. They didn't want me anyhow. Oh! I know I cut a very poor figure. From your point of view. And I quite understand it, mind you. I'm very much with you now. And when I look at you, Mary, I feel rather horrible.

MARY. I didn't think you'd have run away.

LEONARD. No, that's bad, isn't it?

EDGAR. The fellow's a comedian.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Come, Mary.

TIMBRELL. Stop. Mary, would you marry him?

MARY. What, sir?

TIMBRELL. Would you condescend to marry him? Would you be such a fool?

MARY. He wouldn't marry me.

TIMBRELL. So much the worse for him, then. [*To* LEONARD.] You've lived here hitherto at my expense. I turn you out. You're old enough to earn a living. Go.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Edward—

TIMBRELL. My mind's made up. There's only one alternative.

LEONARD. And what's that, sir?

TIMBRELL. That you do reparation. That you do the honest, manly thing. It hasn't occurred to you, it seems.

LEONARD. You mean?—

TIMBRELL. I can hardly advise her to do it. Mary, if you marry him I'll give him £300 a year so long as he behaves himself; if he doesn't you shan't suffer.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Edward. Don't be hasty, don't decide too quickly. I'm thinking of you, Mary, as well as of him.

MARY. I knew you'd be kind to me, ma'am.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Edward, I pray that we may do right.

TIMBRELL. Come, sir. You had better go down on your knees and woo your bride.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Oh! Edward; don't speak like that.

TIMBRELL. He's not worthy of consideration.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I was thinking of her.

TIMBRELL. [*to* LEONARD.] What's your answer?

LEONARD. Mother, will you take Mary away and I will talk to my father.

TIMBRELL. You will talk now and in Mary's presence.

LEONARD. You care nothing about her. It's simply that you're vexed with me. If you were doing it for her I could have some respect for you.

TIMBRELL. Your answer to my proposal.

LEONARD. What's Edgar doing here? Surely we can do without him.

TIMBRELL. [*to* EDGAR.] Stay where you are.

LEONARD. Mary, you know it's impossible.

MARY. Yes, Mr. Leonard.

LEONARD. Mary refuses.

TIMBRELL. So much the worse for you.

LEONARD. But if she refuses—

TIMBRELL. Out you go into the street.

MRS. TIMBRELL. That can't be.

TIMBRELL. That shall be.

LEONARD. Oh! This is all very absurd. We are not being practical at all. Mary, I'm sorry. It's no good you and me marrying. Now is it?

MARY. I suppose not, Mr. Leonard. I don't know what I'm going to do, though.

LEONARD. My father can give you a bit of that £300 a year he talks about. And then—Oh! of course, I don't know. I should like to act handsomely but what can I do? This talk of marriage—frankly—is a bit of antiquated Puritanism. Mary, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. You're a good girl. I'm all to blame. [*He turns*

to his father who sits grimly silent, then to his mother.] Mother, you settle it.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I don't know how.

LEONARD. You parents are in a middle stage. Once you'd just have been brutal to the girl. I don't mean you, but parents generally. Presently we may have more sense. I'm a selfish brute but I've got some sense. But I'm powerless. [*To his father.*] Haven't you any imagination? It's all very fine to make a scene here and put down your foot and coerce me into your beastly righteousness, but think of the years to come. Do you see us married? Do you see our married life? Forgive me, Mary.

TIMBRELL. You shall make an honest woman of her.

LEONARD. A fine old phrase, that.

TIMBRELL. I'm not ashamed of it.

LEONARD. Why shouldn't she be a happy mother without fear and without shame? Mary, don't make that ridiculous mistake of thinking yourself disgraced.

MARY. But I am disgraced.

LEONARD. You are not — not in the eyes of any reasonable human being.

MARY. Then the people I know aren't reasonable.

LEONARD. Have you a father and mother?

MARY. Yes.

LEONARD. And they would—they are—

MARY. They are very respectable.

LEONARD. I see, I see. Yes.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Didn't you tell me you were "keeping company" with some one?

MARY. I was walking out, ma'am. I wasn't keeping company.

LEONARD. I'm afraid I don't appreciate the difference.

MARY. There is a difference.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Have you seen him lately?

MARY. Yes, ma'am.

LEONARD. [*very quietly.*] Would he marry you now? [TIMBRELL *starts in his chair, but does not speak.* MARY *gives a gasp that is almost a sob.*] I know I'm a brute. Would he marry you, Mary?

MRS. TIMBRELL. No, no, no, no.

MARY. George Truefit's a good man. I wouldn't ask him to marry me now.

LEONARD. But if he cares for you he ought to want to marry you now.

MARY. You think you understand things but you don't.

TIMBRELL. Mary, will you marry my son?

MARY. He'd hate me.

TIMBRELL. Nonsense, will you marry him?

MARY. I'd like to marry some one. I've got to face my father. He'll be nasty.

LEONARD. May I point out to you, sir—

TIMBRELL. Silence. You will do what you are told. You are not one of us. You never have been. A useless dilettante. Here's a chance for you. Don't you see that? A chance. If you can't take it, it shall be forced on you. Will you marry him, Mary, or let him go out into the street?

MARY. If he's like as you say, it's no great catch.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Mary!

LEONARD. She's right. I'm no great catch. She's the sensible person in this conference. Let's end it. Let's do something else.

TIMBRELL. We'll finish this now. Edgar, fetch me the Bible—the Family Bible. You know where it is—in the dining-room.

EDGAR. But—what—

TIMBRELL. [*loudly.*] At once. [EDGAR *goes.*]

MRS. TIMBRELL. My dear—[TIMBRELL *holds up his hand and she stops.*]

LEONARD. The Family Bible! It's like bringing out an obsolete instrument of torture. I'd forgotten that we had a Family Bible.

TIMBRELL. The names of my father's children and their wives and children are recorded there.

LEONARD. And a very nice old custom, too.

TIMBRELL. Your ribaldry is ill-timed, sir.

LEONARD. Ribaldry! I can't make a remark that suits you unless I'm hypocritical. I think it is a nice custom.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Edward, let us think over this a little more. Let us try to see things more clearly.

TIMBRELL. Where is Edgar? What's he doing?

MARY. Oh! send me away and be done. I don't want to make trouble.

TIMBRELL. [*loudly.*] Edgar! Where is Edgar? [*Voices are heard outside.* EDGAR *enters with the Bible.*]

TIMBRELL. What's that? Who's there? What have you been doing?

EDGAR. It's Ada and—it's Ada.

LEONARD. Better stop up the keyhole, sir, if you wish these rites to be secret.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Oh! be quiet, Leonard.

LEONARD. I must keep up my spirits somehow, mother.

TIMBRELL. [*loudly.*] Ada! And is Sheila there? Come in. [*They enter immediately.*]

LEONARD. I told you so.

ADA. What is it, father? What's going to happen?

TIMBRELL. Put that Bible down here. [*Pointing to table.*] Pen and ink. [EDGAR *brings pen and ink.*]

ADA. Father, what are you going to do?

TIMBRELL. Sheila, I thought your name would be the next to be entered in this Book, but another is before you.

ADA. Father, I don't want to be hard on Mary, but really—I do think—

SHEILA. I'm sorry for her, but I think I ought to be considered. My wedding's spoilt.

LEONARD. Inadequate, inadequate. My dear Sheila, you're bringing us down to a lower level than we've reached yet.

MARY. I won't stay. I thank you for your kindness, ma'am. I give you a month's notice, but if I may I'll go now without wages.

LEONARD. Just listen to her, Sheila. It may do you good.

TIMBRELL. Listen to this. [*He strikes the Bible with his fist.*] I swear by this Book that unless my son, Leonard, marries that woman, Mary—What is your name?

MARY. My name is Mary Broome.

TIMBRELL. Mary Broome, he leaves this house—to-day—and never again receives support in money or aught else from me. [*This is spoken standing. He sits down heavily. A short pause.*] It is now between my son Leonard and Mary Broome. [*He opens the Bible at the blank pages before the title-page, and putting on his spectacles, looks fixedly and inscrutably at the names inscribed there.*]

SHEILA. [*to* EDGAR.] I think you ought to interfere.

TIMBRELL. [*without looking up.*] If Sheila is not satisfied with her sister-in-law she need not marry into this family.

SHEILA. She would be my brother-in-law's wife, not my sister-in-law.

LEONARD. You are saved.

TIMBRELL. I want to know whether I must write Mary Broome's name here.

EDGAR. It's after marriage you'd do that—not before.

TIMBRELL. This time it's before.

LEONARD. There's a sort of grandeur about a man with a fixed idea.

EDGAR. I know you're an obstinate—a determined man, sir, but I'll ask you for once to consider—

TIMBRELL. Silence.

EDGAR. Mother—

MRS. TIMBRELL. It's no use. I've never stood up against him. I've let him have his own way all these years. It didn't seem to matter.

TIMBRELL. I am the head of this house.

His implacability daunts them. There are whisperings between ADA, SHEILA *and* EDGAR. MRS. TIMBRELL *is a little apart, quiet and sad. In the grouping* MARY *has come to the front.* LEONARD *moves a step or two nearer to her, and the others are in a rough ring about them.*

LEONARD. Mary.

MARY. Well?

LEONARD. I've done you a frightful wrong. There's no getting away from that. Don't let it worry you too much. It wasn't your fault. It wasn't your fault at all. But it's not such a wrong as this—as this would be. May I say that I've been admiring you greatly to-day. I think you're a beautiful creature. Good-bye. [*He holds out his hand.*]

MARY. But—

MRS. TIMBRELL. My dear boy—

TIMBRELL. Your cunning won't do. You're full of shams and tricks.

LEONARD. I was never more sincere.

TIMBRELL. How long do your sincerities last?

LEONARD. I know. I know. It's gusts and moods with me. Mary, you'll believe me now. [*He looks at his watch.*] At what o'clock does this house cease to be my home?

TIMBRELL. The sooner the better.

MARY. But what are you going to do?

LEONARD. I don't know. I shall sponge on my pals for a time, I suppose. I shall dun my mother. I might get down to Ada. Edgar, I think you're safe.

By-the-bye, Sheila, can you lend me half-a-crown? [*He turns suddenly to his father.*] Do you see the folly of it yet? Are you going to budge? What about my mother? Is it fair to her?

TIMBRELL. You begin to think of your mother too late.

LEONARD. Oh! I know I'm as selfish as they're made. You're well out of it, Mary. There's no relenting, then?

TIMBRELL. None. [LEONARD *pauses for a moment and then walks towards the door.*]

MARY. Stop. [*He stops and looks round.*] Come here, please. [*He returns to her.*] I'll—I'll do as you like.

LEONARD. You mean you'd marry me?

MARY. If you like.

LEONARD. [*looking intently at her.*] I wonder if it's possible.

MARY. You needn't unless you like.

LEONARD. Do you want it? Is it for me you'd do it?

MARY. It'd make me unhappy for you to go away like that.

LEONARD. Mary, I think I like you enough to marry you. But you mustn't unless you want to marry me.

MARY. I want to marry somebody.

LEONARD. Oh! thank you. You're beautifully frank.

MARY. It's only that I don't quite understand you. You were going away. You were packing your—

LEONARD. I have the honour to ask you to be my wife.

MARY. Yes, I will.

TIMBRELL. [*writing.*] Mary Broom. B-R-O-O-M?

MARY. E, sir. B-R-O-O-M-E. My father told us we must always stick to the E. It's more genteel.

TIMBRELL. Yes. By-the-bye, what is your father, Mary? What's his occupation?

MARY. He's a cabman, sir.

TIMBRELL. Quite so. Quite so.

MARY. [*after a short pause.*] It's rather late, ma'am. Shall I bring in tea ?

MRS. TIMBRELL. You are very good, Mary. If you will, please.

CURTAIN

ACT II

The same place. Nearly a year later. Christmas Eve. The room is decorated with evergreens, etc. TIMBRELL *and* EDGAR *discovered. They are in jackets and black ties, etc.*

TIMBRELL. [*surveying* EDGAR.] Yes, that's right—black tie—You told Sheila to put on some half and half affair? Not full evening dress, you know. Of course I didn't like to say anything to Leonard, but his wife's a sensible girl—in some ways. She'll manage to be—er—neat, you know. Bit of an ordeal for her, but I'm sure you and Sheila will do all you can to make it—er—pass off pleasantly.

EDGAR. Certainly, certainly.

MRS. TIMBRELL *enters. She wears the kind of afternoon gown that some ladies of the middle class wear in the evenings when they have not company.* TIMBRELL *scrutinises each lady as she enters with more or less approval.*

TIMBRELL. [*surveying his wife.*] Yes, yes. By-the-bye, Edgar, you will take Mrs. Leonard in. I must take in Mrs. Pendleton, of course. Pendleton, your mother. Let's see.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Oughtn't you to take in Mary?

TIMBRELL. What's that?

ADA *and* SHEILA *enter. They are not in evening dress but in a kind of compromise with which they are not content.*

ADA. [*to her father.*] I hope this will satisfy you.

TIMBRELL. [*surveying them.*] Quite right. Very good. [*To his wife.*] What were you saying?

MRS. TIMBRELL. I thought that perhaps you ought to take Mary in.

TIMBRELL. Mary? Why?

MRS. TIMBRELL. Well, she's the bride, I suppose. Of course, Sheila had her turn long ago.

TIMBRELL. The bride! [*He is staggered but doesn't know what to say.*]

MRS. TIMBRELL. This little party is really in her honour.

TIMBRELL. In her honour. [*He repeats it helplessly.*]

ADA. Really, mother, I think this is rather unnecessary.

SHEILA. Mrs. Pendleton would hardly expect to go after Mary.

Enter maidservant.

SERVANT. Mr. and Mrs. Pendleton.

They enter—salutations, etc. MR. PENDLETON *wears a swallow-tail, black tie, etc.* MRS. PENDLETON *a ponderous compromise. They are a respectable, middle-class couple.*

TIMBRELL. Well, well. How are you, Pendleton? Mrs. Pendleton, draw up to the fire. These young people are not here yet. Leonard never took much account of time. It's very good of you to have come.

PENDLETON. Very happy indeed, I'm sure.

TIMBRELL. You see, Mrs. Pendleton, we thought—I'm sure you'll understand—Christmas Eve, you know—and you and Pendleton such old friends. Of course we might have had just the family, but they'll take it as a bit of a compliment to meet you. You know how it is—I needn't explain—they haven't been here yet. You'll quite understand.

MRS. PENDLETON. Don't say any more about it, Mr. Timbrell. I'm sure you're behaving very well and we're very glad—very glad.

TIMBRELL. Yes, and do you know, I believe the marriage is not going to turn out so badly after all. She'll make a man of him. I was very firm about it. However, we won't go into that now.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Do you know my daughter-in-law, Mrs. Pendleton?

MRS. PENDLETON. [*turning to* SHEILA.] Oh, yes, I've had the pleasure—

MRS. TIMBRELL. I didn't mean Sheila; I meant Mary —Mrs. Leonard.

MRS. PENDLETON. Oh! well—know her? I—that is—

MRS. TIMBRELL. She was the best housemaid I ever had.

TIMBRELL. Well, well, I think it's turning frosty again. What are you paying for coals now, Pendleton?

Enter maidservant.

SERVANT. Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Timbrell.

LEONARD *and* MARY *enter. He is in evening dress with a white waistcoat and white tie.* MARY *wears a low dress, not a very elaborate one but quite simple and pretty. The others look at them in some consternation.*

TIMBRELL. Tut! tut! Oh! this is all wrong.

MRS. TIMBRELL. [*laughing a little as she goes forward to* MARY.] Well, Mary, you are a swell.

MARY. I didn't want to be like this. [*She turns rather distressfully to her husband who looks round at the company. General, rather stiff greetings.*]

LEONARD. We seem to have committed a slight error of judgment. I have, I mean. Mary, you have a sound social instinct. I can never tell what these bourgeois people will do. And mind you [*holding out his hand deprecatingly*]—I use the word simply and inoffensively. You understand that, Mrs. Pendleton. I'm an outsider.

EDGAR. You mean a bounder?

LEONARD. Quite good, Edgar, if you could only get a pleasant tone into your voice. As you say it, it's so bad socially. And how are you, Sheila?

SHEILA. I'm quite well, thank you.

LEONARD. Chilly, chilly. Mother, you've got an awkward job this evening.

TIMBRELL. Don't be absurd, sir.

MRS. TIMBRELL *and* MARY *retire up the stage and sit down together.* ADA *and* SHEILA *also converse together in whispers with* MRS. PENDLETON. *The four men are to the front.*

PENDLETON. And what are you doing with yourself now, Leonard?

LEONARD. Still at the old game, sir; still at the old game.

PENDLETON. Indeed! What's that?

LEONARD. Well, do you know I had to fill up my census paper the other day and I was rather bothered to describe myself. Of course I'm a literary man, but that hardly seems to cover the ground. I'm really a kind of sponge, but that doesn't rank as a regular trade.

TIMBRELL. You'll make nothing of him, Pendleton, when he's in this humour.

EDGAR. Why can't you talk simply instead of spouting all this rot?

LEONARD. You are always baffled when I tell the truth.

EDGAR. It somehow ceases to be the truth when you tell it.

LEONARD. Good. You see how my family is prejudiced against me, Mr. Pendleton. My virtues are not virtues, my white is black. My only chance is to put myself right by committing a crime. Then I should command sympathy, my family would begin to understand me. Mr. Pendleton, won't you consider these preliminaries over and give me a little assistance?

I want something to do. Give me a place in your office.

PENDLETON. [*rather alarmed.*] But, my dear boy, I'm afraid—I hardly think—

LEONARD. [*burlesque so slight as to be hardly perceptible to* PENDLETON.] Give me a chance, sir. I've a wife and family.

PENDLETON. [*laughing uneasily.*] You're clever enough, I believe.

TIMBRELL. He wouldn't do for an office boy.

LEONARD. That's perfectly true. Most of the business men I have met would do for it very well.

EDGAR. You'd better try the music-hall stage.

LEONARD. Now that's quite a helpful suggestion. That's an idea, Edgar. Humbugs like myself make good actors.

TIMBRELL. You are not serious, sir.

LEONARD. Hardly. No.

PENDLETON. I've heard that Harry Lauder got—how much a week was it—when he—? Something astonishing. Why, sir, there are very few merchants in the city of London who make as much.

LEONARD. [*reflecting.*] The music-halls. Mary! [*Deep in talk with* MRS. TIMBRELL *she doesn't hear.*] No matter.

PENDLETON. They've something better to talk about.

LEONARD. When I see two women talking like that, I always think it must be about the servant question.

EDGAR. I say! What infernally bad taste!

TIMBRELL. [*breaking impatiently away.*] My dear, isn't dinner ready?

LEONARD. Where's the fatted calf?

MRS. TIMBRELL. Oh! dear! Ring the bell, somebody. [*Somebody rings the bell.*] Mrs. Pendleton, I'm very remiss, but this is a family party, you know. Mary was telling me about the baby.

MRS. PENDLETON. You must let me come and see it, my dear. [*To* ADA.] Is it a boy or a girl?

ADA. It's a—it's a— [*She looks at* SHEILA.]

SHEILA. } [*together.*] { Girl.
MRS. TIMBRELL. } { Boy.

LEONARD. It's a very remarkable baby.

MRS. PENDLETON. [*to* MRS. TIMBRELL.] A boy. How very nice. And what have you called him?

MARY. Leonard.

MRS. PENDLETON. Right, my dear. I think the eldest son ought always to be called after his father.

LEONARD. Confusing for the historian.

Enter maidservant.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Oh! Beryl, isn't dinner ready?

MAID. If you please, ma'am, there's been rather a little accident in the dining-room.

MRS. TIMBRELL. } [*together.*] { Oh! dear!
TIMBRELL. } { What's that?
ADA. } { An accident!

MAID. Well, the soot came down the chimney just now and it's made such a mess. We're just clearing it away, but it's a job. We'll have to change the table-cloth.

MARY. [*who has taken a great interest in this.*] That damper wants a bit of coaxing, but I expect it's the coals. [*To* TIMBRELL, *reproachfully.*] You've not gone back to those cheap coals again, sir? They do make such a lot of soot.

TIMBRELL. Well—er—

MRS. TIMBRELL. You would do it, you know. [*To* MRS. PENDLETON.] Does your husband come and show you how to save money in the house?

MRS. PENDLETON. I'd like to see him try.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I'm afraid I don't stand up against him. I'm very weak. Well, get things straight as soon as you can, Beryl.

MAID. Yes, ma'am. It'll be a little time yet, I'm afraid. [*She goes out.*]

MRS. PENDLETON. What did you call her?

MRS. TIMBRELL. Beryl.

MRS. PENDLETON. Well, I never.

MRS. TIMBRELL. She said that was her name.

TIMBRELL. I told you, my dear, that it was quite unsuitable.

MRS. TIMBRELL. She seemed to like the name.

TIMBRELL. I suggested Jane.

LEONARD. Ah! you may interfere about coals but not in things that matter like this. Of course Beryl is abominable, but when you know that mother let the poor girl stick to it—why! then it's charming.

EDGAR. Well, we've a little time to put in, it seems. Mrs. Pendleton, you haven't seen the album that Sheila and I made up when we were honeymooning. We took a lot and bought some. [*He gets out album and shows photographs.* SHEILA *and* ADA *hover about.*]

TIMBRELL. [*looking at his watch.*] Very annoying.

PENDLETON. Don't you bother.

TIMBRELL. [*with an effort at geniality.*] Well, Mary, my girl. It's a shame to keep you waiting.

MARY. It doesn't matter a bit, sir.

TIMBRELL. [*testily.*] Don't call me sir.

MARY. No, sir—I mean No, Mr. Timbrell.

LEONARD. Call him Daddy. She calls me sir sometimes. I rather like it. It feeds my vanity. What I like about Mary is that she has none of that absurd pretence that woman is the equal of man.

ADA. What nonsense!

SHEILA. He always does talk nonsense.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I expect Mary keeps you in good order at home. Do you, Mary? Is he behaving nicely?

MARY. I think so sometimes.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Now what does that mean?

MARY. I find it so hard to understand him.

LEONARD. She's simple. I'm ironical. I can't get out of the habit.

MARY. I'm stupid and I can only judge by what he does.

LEONARD. Ay, ay. That's the devil. It's explanations I'm good at—not doing things.

MARY. But I don't understand the explanations.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Poor Mary.

MARY. Did you understand him?

MRS. TIMBRELL. He thinks I didn't. But I'm afraid all this will not interest our friends. We don't let Mr. Pendleton have a word.

PENDLETON. Oh! don't mind me, ma'am. I'm all right.

LEONARD. And Mrs. Pendleton's all right, I'm sure. She's got her eye on us. Of course, you know, Mrs. Pendleton, that Mary and I are—well—we're rather on show here. This is a social experiment. Now, why not go deeper into it? Mary's manners are quite nice. Anybody can see that. The housemaid's manners are always better than those of the daughter of the house. Now, father, keep quiet. My manners are what they always have been. You see my point is that the question whether we shall behave nicely on pleasant little family occasions isn't interesting. If you are really interested in Mary and me, let's try to go a little deeper into things.

TIMBRELL. Perfect rubbish!

LEONARD. It's your weak point, sir. If I haven't pointed it out before, I ought to have done—you will meet everything with exclamations and interjections. Conversation can't be carried on like that. There must be some reasonable way of looking at me. I may be an extraordinary specimen, but you ought to get used to me.

PENDLETON. Never mind, Leonard, my boy, I was a bit eccentric myself when I was young. I wanted to go on the stage.

LEONARD. I never wanted to go on the stage. I'm ready if they'll give me Harry Lauder's salary.

PENDLETON. Do you know what my old father did? He gave me a good hiding and I've been all the better for it.

LEONARD. How do you know?

PENDLETON. [*with a shrug that is half exhibition.*] Well—

LEONARD. I can hardly blame fathers. They are in an impossible position. They pretend to teach and they ought to learn.

TIMBRELL. Who makes the position impossible? You and Edgar were treated alike—up to a certain point. I never allowed any favouritism; what one got the other got. There was never the slightest difference—

LEONARD. But why should you treat us alike when we were totally different?

TIMBRELL. Up to a point, I said.

LEONARD. [*surveying his brother.*] And this is the success. I might have been like this if I'd tried.

TIMBRELL. I was always ready to take a reasonable and a liberal point of view.

LEONARD. Ah! You Liberals. It's feeling that you're so jolly liberal that confirms you in your wickedness.

TIMBRELL. Wickedness!

LEONARD. A rhetorical term, of course.

TIMBRELL. [*with real dejection.*] I do my best, but I can't understand your language. You puzzle me, my boy.

LEONARD. Don't mind me, sir. I'm a rotter.

MRS. TIMBRELL. You want your dinner, Leonard.

LEONARD. Well, well, little mother. I'd like to know what you think about it all.

MRS. TIMBRELL. He's a wild boy, Mary.

MARY. He can be very sensible if he likes.

LEONARD. Don't deny me my wildness. Don't make me out a sham.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Wild, wild.

LEONARD. And where does it come from? How do I get it? Mr. Pendleton, who are the wild people here?

PENDLETON. Nay, my boy. I'm not up to your tricks and turns.

LEONARD. I'll tell you. Mary and my mother—they're very much alike.

TIMBRELL. I think we'll leave this subject.

EDGAR. You won't get him away from himself.

LEONARD. Brother, brother, I'll be silent if you've anything worth saying.

MARY. You shouldn't say I'm like your mother.

LEONARD. But you are.

MARY. You make me unhappy.

LEONARD. Then I shouldn't say it. But you are.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I'd be glad to think that I'm like you, Mary.

MARY. It's all unhappy for me. I spoil everything.

ADA. It isn't your fault.

MARY. [*to* ADA.] You want to blame it all on him. That's no use. It isn't all him.

SHEILA. We want to be kind to you.

MARY. It doesn't matter about me. I'd rather you were down on me and kind to him. This is his family. And I'm not comfortable, ma'am, and it's partly this dress, and I wonder if you would mind if I went home and you'd all get on better together. I spoil everything.

MRS. TIMBRELL. You silly girl; you spoil nothing, and you're as good as gold and we all like you.

ADA. You mustn't go, and the dress looks very nice.

SHEILA. Very nice, indeed.

MRS. TIMBRELL. And you shall have a little shawl over your shoulders if you like.

TIMBRELL. All we want is our dinner.

MARY. I'm sure you're all very kind—but—

LEONARD. We're getting on fine now.

EDGAR. You see, you've been out of the conversation for about two minutes.

LEONARD. Is that it, brother?

EDGAR. What's this trick of calling me brother?

LEONARD. I'm tasting the relationship. There's a certain piquancy in calling you brother.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Leonard, you won't quarrel with your brother.

LEONARD. No. And yet he's one of the men I could quarrel with. Once or twice I've been angry with Edgar. I've had the true intoxication of anger. [*To* EDGAR.] Do you know it? It's a delirious joy. Your brain streams out like a scarlet banner.

EDGAR. You quarrelled over trifles.

LEONARD. Yes, they would do. Our differences were deep.

TIMBRELL. Well, Pendleton. I hope you're having a pleasant evening.

MRS. PENDLETON. Oh! we don't count this little bit of time before dinner.

PENDLETON. I don't like brothers to quarrel, though. I hope you young fellows will make it up before the evening's out.

MRS. PENDLETON. Well, you've got two very different sons, Mrs. Timbrell.

PENDLETON. Leave that, Maria.

LEONARD. Which favours the mother, Mrs. Pendleton?

MRS. PENDLETON. Why, Mr. Edgar.

LEONARD. No—no. You wouldn't say that, mother.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I've not said it. I've never said it.

LEONARD. [*takes his mother by the shoulders.*] You've borne two sons, little mother. How did you manage to make them so different? By God! You're nearer to me; you're more like me. And like Mary; I tell you, you're like Mary. A strain of wildness. Yes. Where does my wildness come from? It comes from you. [*He*

shakes her gently.] I know you. Oh! you're demure. I know you. I wonder what you were before you became a respectable married woman. Ah! you cunning little one. You've doubled and turned in your time; you've—

TIMBRELL. Stop, stop.

EDGAR. Monstrous.

PENDLETON. By Jove! this is too much.

LEONARD *turns to regard them. He and his mother are surrounded by indignant, half-menacing figures.*

TIMBRELL. Take your hands from her.

EDGAR. Turn the blackguard out.

TIMBRELL. I can't believe—I can't understand—this fellow is too much for me.

PENDLETON. He's too much for any of us.

LEONARD. [*he looks again at his mother. She is very still and droops a little.*] Mother! What did I say? Have I made a mistake? Have I hurt you? I wouldn't do that. [*He allows her to sink into a chair.*]

MARY. How could you say such things?

LEONARD. What did I say?

MARY. You made her out—no better than me.

MRS. PENDLETON. Hush! Hush!

TIMBRELL. I wouldn't have said it, but since she has—You dare to suggest that your mother is no better than your wife?

PENDLETON. Now, come, Timbrell; that's not the way to put it.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Mary is good enough for me.

TIMBRELL. That isn't the point. Don't you yourself resent—didn't you hear what he said?

MRS. TIMBRELL. I thought he was a little cruel.

LEONARD. But who cares for you in this family as I do?

ADA. Who cares less? Who would treat her so abominably?

EDGAR. My mother is to me an immaculate saint. To you—

LEONARD. What do I care for immaculate saints! What good are they to me? My mother's a strange woman. She has all kinds of curious reserves and she lives among you quite like one of yourselves.

MARY. I will say this. He has always spoken beautifully about her.

LEONARD. Bravo! Mary. Stand up for me.

TIMBRELL. I don't wish to act hastily—I have tried hard to control myself—

LEONARD. Oh! be natural, sir. Be natural.

TIMBRELL. Go down on your knees, sir, and beg your mother's pardon.

LEONARD. Certainly, if she wishes it.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I do not wish it.

TIMBRELL. Do you realise what he said about you?

MRS. TIMBRELL. He's very clever. No doubt there's some truth in it.

TIMBRELL. Some truth? Some truth? Do you mean to say—I don't understand you. I don't like to ask you what you mean—I—

PENDLETON. Now, Timbrell, I think we'd better leave it here. [*To* MRS. PENDLETON.] Don't you think so, Maria?

MRS. PENDLETON. I should want to carry it a little further in her place.

MRS. TIMBRELL. [*having quite recovered.*] Would anybody like to ask me any questions?

PENDLETON. [*shocked.*] Questions?

MRS. TIMBRELL. About my early life. [*She gives a sad little laugh.*]

PENDLETON. Questions! My dear madam—

TIMBRELL. This is painful. This is quite impossible. [*To his wife.*] I cannot understand you. I suppose you are trying to screen him.

MARY. He always speaks of his mother beautifully.

LEONARD. And why shouldn't I when I admire her

immensely? Why can't you people be natural and let me be natural? I say there's a strange, mysterious, incalculable being behind her placid mask and you want to make out I mean something beastly. How have you stood it all these years, mother? And they never seem to have found you out.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Do you think I've found myself out?

LEONARD. You've found the other people out, and that's very much the same thing. I tell you what—you ought to come and live with me and Mary.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Nonsense.

LEONARD. It would be tremendously fine if you did that. After all these years—it would be magnificent.

EDGAR. Is this to go on?

TIMBRELL. No. I'm exceedingly sorry, Pendleton, that you and Mrs. Pendleton should be in such a scene. [*To* LEONARD.] I'll ask you to leave the house. Mary may stay if she pleases.

LEONARD. But I want my dinner.

TIMBRELL. You can get your dinner at home.

LEONARD. Mary?

MARY. There's not much. I'll go with you.

PENDLETON. Now look here, Timbrell—

TIMBRELL. Not a word. [*To* LEONARD.] And I've something to say to you before you go.

LEONARD. I'm afraid it's something nasty.

TIMBRELL. Yes, sir. It's something nasty. I've been making you an allowance at the rate of three hundred a year. It will stop at once.

LEONARD. [*alarmed.*] Here! You can't do that.

TIMBRELL. Can't I? I will.

LEONARD. But it wouldn't be cricket. You couldn't possibly do that. How are we to live without it?

TIMBRELL. That's your business.

LEONARD. You made me marry Mary. It was the condition—the condition was implied—

TIMBRELL. Silence! You forget we are not alone.

LEONARD. Oh! What's the use of these disguises? They know all about it. Let us accept what's past. Mrs. Pendleton, I needn't make any apologies. All this must be frightfully interesting to you. Mr. Pendleton, I shall want your help. I put it to you as an honest business man —but you're joking, sir; you're joking. [LEONARD *has become more serious than he has been.*]

TIMBRELL. You'll see whether I'm joking.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Do you intend to punish Mary, too?

TIMBRELL. I shall allow her—[*considering*], I shall allow her two pounds a week and see that it is paid to her.

MRS. TIMBRELL. What you propose is unfair. You can't do it.

TIMBRELL. Perhaps you would like to go and live with them as he proposes?

MRS. TIMBRELL. I've no income. You've never paid my wages.

TIMBRELL. Wages!

MRS. TIMBRELL. Yes, there's something in what these suffrage people say. I'm at your mercy, I suppose. So is Leonard, so is Ada. I suppose Edgar is getting out of your clutches.

TIMBRELL. Do you think to gain your point by talk like this?

MRS. TIMBRELL. No. This is for my own satisfaction. I'm vexed with you.

TIMBRELL. You didn't think that I gave any credence to that boy's abominable suggestions?

LEONARD. Please don't talk about that now. There's something more serious to consider.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Don't talk about it now, either.

LEONARD. I don't see how we can talk about anything else. We must have an income. Mr. Pendleton, I appeal to you—

PENDLETON. Nay, let him calm down.

TIMBRELL. I shall not calm down. I am perfectly calm. The fellow shall suffer. It will do him good.

MRS. TIMBRELL. And Mary and the child must suffer.

MRS. PENDLETON. Ah! now, Mr. Timbrell—your grandchild.

MARY. He hasn't seen him.

MRS. PENDLETON. Not seen him! Ah! Mr. Timbrell, you're the one that's to blame.

TIMBRELL. Really, madam, I can't discuss the matter with you. I've said what I mean to do.

EDGAR. It's about time this dinner was ready, isn't it?

LEONARD. And to think that all this bother is through a confounded chimney! We might have been comfortably at table, with incomes secure. What do you think of the governor's proposal, Edgar—as a business man?

EDGAR. Don't talk to me.

LEONARD. No, brother.

TIMBRELL. [*bouncing from the chair on which he had seated himself.*] I tell you I will not stand—

Enter maidservant.

MAID. Dinner is served.

Those who are seated rise hesitatingly. TIMBRELL *glares about him and then offers his arm to* MRS. PENDLETON, *who accompanies him out of the room.* SHEILA *and* ADA *follow.* EDGAR *offers his arm to* MARY, *who shakes her head.* PENDLETON *offers his arm to* MRS. TIMBRELL.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Excuse me for a moment. [*She turns to* MARY *and* LEONARD.] What are you going to do?

LEONARD. Well, we don't seem to be wanted here.

PENDLETON. Better all come.

MARY. I want to go home.

LEONARD. Yes, it's all right for you when you get to your baby.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I'll follow you, Mr. Pendleton.

PENDLETON. Well, I'll just see what Timbrell's up to now. [*He goes out.*]

MRS. TIMBRELL. I think you had better not stay.

MARY. No, let us go.

LEONARD. I've made a mess of it, mother.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Never mind that.

LEONARD. No. That doesn't matter. But I've hurt you. I've shaken you. You look pale and queer now. I've no reverence. I'm selfish. But I can sympathise. Do you see that? I understand you better than any one does, mother. I know you better, I like you more. You don't properly exist without me. Did I say some horrible things about you? I really don't know what I meant. It was a kind of inspiration. Oh! yes. I know the proper things to say about one's mother.

MRS. TIMBRELL. But I'm a mother like the rest.

MARY. He doesn't understand that. He wants to see all sorts of things in you.

MRS. TIMBRELL. We're just mothers, aren't we, Mary?

MARY. That's the best.

LEONARD. Yes, Mary's a mother. But what of you, poor thing? Look at us. Look at Edgar and me and Ada. Look at the finished product. What's the good of it? What's the good of being a mother when one's children are grown up? I can understand Mary. I've watched her with the baby. There's been something suppressed and killed in you.

MARY. Don't say these things to her.

LEONARD. Failure is written on her face.

MARY. Don't, don't.

LEONARD. I'm at my best in saying such things.

MARY. But they hurt her. You only care for yourself.

LEONARD. She must be hurt. We've let her alone all these years. She ought to have revolted. She ought to be alive now.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I remember you all as babies, as children. I've got the past.

LEONARD. Was I always your favourite, mother?

MRS. TIMBRELL. I won't say that. [*She listens for a moment to a distant sound.*] Perhaps you'd better go.

EDGAR *enters.*

EDGAR. Aren't you coming, mother? It's most awkward. There'll be an awful row.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Yes. Edgar, is it any use their coming? Mr. Pendleton was going to see whether—

EDGAR. I don't think it's the slightest use. He's boiling over.

MARY. Oh! let us go.

LEONARD. Come on. But look here. It's no use our going home. Edgar, lend us a sovereign.

EDGAR. You'd condescend to borrow from me, then?

LEONARD. My dear fellow, you don't seem to understand that I'm magnanimous. [EDGAR *laughs.*] You think that's a joke. You never see my jokes.

EDGAR. I can't stay.

LEONARD. Have you any money about you, mother?

MRS. TIMBRELL. [*to* EDGAR.] Give it to him.

LEONARD. Mother will repay you out of the housekeeping. [EDGAR *fumbles in his pocket.*] Look here. Make it two pounds. Mary and I don't often have a treat together. It's a special occasion. We may as well do it handsome for once. What about the Savoy and a music-hall, Mary? You look the part fine. [*His spirits are obviously rising.*]

MARY. I wonder if I'd not better go home.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Go and enjoy yourself, my dear.

EDGAR *hands money to* LEONARD, *who looks at it.*

LEONARD. Well, I'm damned. One pound ten.

EDGAR. Quite enough, too.

LEONARD. It's not that I'm thinking of. It's the extraordinary meanness of your character.

Enter ADA.

ADA. Mother, do come. He says I'm to bring you or else the Family Bible.

LEONARD. The devil!

MRS. TIMBRELL. I'll come.

CURTAIN FALLS

ACT III

Rather poor lodgings. MARY, *neatly but very plainly dressed, is sewing at a child's garment.* LEONARD *sprawls on the sofa smoking cheap cigarettes. He is carelessly dressed to the point of slovenliness, and a little anxiety begins to show through his calmness, which is generally maintained. It is afternoon. Two or three months have elapsed.*

LEONARD. I don't think it's that the old man's mean. He's got on the high horse and doesn't know how to get down.

MARY. We oughtn't to take the money from your mother. It's very hard for her.

LEONARD. Oh! but it only means that she gives them rice pudding instead of gooseberry tart. It'll do them good. I expect the old man sees the difference and pretends he doesn't. And Edgar will be furious.

MARY. If little Leonard had a brother and they were like you and your brother—I couldn't bear that.

LEONARD. It's a long way off, old lady.

MARY. Things aren't a long way off if you think they might come.

LEONARD. Don't worry, now. Don't worry.

MARY. I'm a great deal happier than you. I've got him.

LEONARD. Well, haven't I?

MARY. No, you haven't. Not like me.

LEONARD. You don't think I'm such a bad father, do you?

MARY. I don't know. You're funny with him and I like to see you together, but—

LEONARD. Well?

MARY. You keep spending the money.

LEONARD. But, Mary, you don't know how much more I could spend if I had it.

MARY. And, so clever as you are, you don't make any —I mean don't make much.

LEONARD. You see, in my trade, the better you are the more wretchedly you get paid.

MARY. You keep telling me that.

LEONARD. And you don't believe it?

MARY. Yes, I do. I think you mean it. I don't think it can be quite true. I think you could get more money if you tried. You're clever enough to write the way they want.

LEONARD. What do you care for most in the world—barring the baby?

MARY. [*considering.*] I don't think there's anything. Oh! I beg your pardon. Of course there's you.

LEONARD. Never mind me. Could you believe that I care more about writing my own way than for anything?

MARY. I suppose it's good to care for something, but that seems selfish.

LEONARD. You're beginning to feel a bit of resentment. You don't hate me yet, do you?

MARY. No, of course not.

LEONARD. I shouldn't blame you. You're a wonderfully even-tempered person. I sometimes wonder whether I'm right about that streak of wildness in you. Do you think you could do strange things—what shall I say—wicked things?

MARY. I've done one wicked thing.

LEONARD. Does it trouble you, Mary? Does it still trouble you? Would you alter it?

MARY. Then I shouldn't have little Leonard. I can

never understand. If I'd known of him—if I'd thought of little Leonard—then it couldn't be wrong. But how could I think of him when he wasn't born? It was wicked. It wasn't like me.

LEONARD. You did think of him, Mary. No, you didn't think. It's not thought. It was nature—something bigger than you—forcing you—forcing you to bring little Leonard into the world. Now, take comfort in that, my girl; there is some comfort in it.

MARY. I can't see what it's got to do with him. It's not children I care for; it's him. Well, he's here now. I've got him now.

LEONARD. Quite right, my dear.

MARY. But I think he ought to have Lubbock's food regularly and we must have a perambulator.

LEONARD. Well, this must go. [*Taking out his watch.*]

MARY. Would you? Will you?

LEONARD. [*looking ruefully at the watch.*] You'd better take me at my word. My generous moods don't last.

MARY. Shall I take it?

He is slowly unhooking the watch when there is a knock at the door and MRS. GREAVES, *the landlady, comes in. He puts the watch in his pocket.*

MRS. GREAVES. I should like a word, sir.

LEONARD. A whole history if you like, Mrs. Greaves.

MRS. GREAVES. Sir!

LEONARD. I was only quoting Shakespeare, Mrs. Greaves.

MRS. GREAVES. I know nothing about him, sir.

LEONARD. He's the man that writes the plays.

MRS. GREAVES. There's some people too fond of plays and such things.

LEONARD. Now I hope you're not going to attack Shakespeare, Mrs. Greaves.

MRS. GREAVES. I'm attacking nothing, sir, but I should like a word and perhaps it would be more pleasant if Mrs.—the lady wasn't here.

LEONARD. Why mustn't Mrs. the lady be here ?

MRS. GREAVES. It's as you like.

LEONARD. Fire away.

MRS. GREAVES. I must tell you, perfectly frank, that there's been some talk about you. I know that lady that comes here to see you is your mother and that I don't understand. But I've heard tell of carryings on with a housemaid and it is said as you're not married. I know mothers'll do a good deal for their sons, but I must say—

LEONARD. Who says this ?

MRS. GREAVES. It's not only one. There's Mr. Whales, the milkman, and he does a good round and hears a lot—

LEONARD. We shall have no more dealings with Mr. Whales.

MRS. GREAVES. You wouldn't, anyhow, till he got paid.

MARY. No more milk ?

MRS. GREAVES. No, and it's not only milk.

LEONARD. Mrs. Greaves, this lady is my wife and any one who says she isn't is telling an abominable lie. I'm surprised that you should listen to such stuff.

MRS. GREAVES. Of course I know she's got on a ring and all that, but that's what they do, and I can't afford to be out of my money ; I really can't. I don't want to be hard, but my account must be settled.

LEONARD. Now first of all, Mrs. Greaves, you will apologise to my wife. Then we'll settle the other matter.

MRS. GREAVES. I'm sure I'm sorry if there's been a mistake. I've no call to make mischief. I'll ask your pardon, ma'am, very willing, but Mr. Whales, he said—and he's only saying what others—

LEONARD. No more of that, now, if you want to have your bill paid.

MRS. GREAVES. You can be made to pay.

LEONARD. And so can you be made to pay. Do you know what you've done?

MRS. GREAVES. Done? I know I've been done.

LEONARD. Good, Mrs. Greaves—very good—I'm glad you can joke about it. It may be no joke for you.

MRS. GREAVES. What do you mean?

LEONARD. It's slander. They give very heavy damages now for slander.

MRS. GREAVES. I've only mentioned what I've been told.

LEONARD. Yes, that's slander. It's sometimes called defamation of character. Same thing.

MRS. GREAVES. I'm sure I'd no intention at all of saying anything—I've been very lenient, too.

LEONARD. Perhaps you'll give me the name of your solicitor, Mrs. Greaves.

MRS. GREAVES. What for? I haven't got a solicitor. I don't understand what you want.

MARY. I think he's joking, Mrs. Greaves.

LEONARD. [*with mock vexation.*] Tut! tut!

MRS. GREAVES. [*doubtfully.*] I know slander's a nasty law, but I can't see as I've said anything.

LEONARD. It's not all a joke, Mary. You may tell your Whales and people that if I hear another word about it I go straight to a solicitor.

MRS. GREAVES. I'll tell him, sir.

LEONARD. Very well. You may go, Mrs. Greaves.

MARY. Solicitors like to be paid too.

MRS. GREAVES. [*turning at the door.*] And what about my bill, sir?

LEONARD. It shall be attended to.

MRS. GREAVES. I've heard that very often.

LEONARD. It is a bit stale, isn't it? I apologise for

the old wheeze. Well, you see, there's the perambulator first.

MRS. GREAVES. The what, sir?

LEONARD. The first money we get is for a perambulator—no. The first is for a pint or a peck, or whatever it is, of what's-his-name's food for the baby. Second, the perambulator. You're only third, Mrs. Greaves. Rather a bad third, but your turn will come.

MARY. It's not fair to her. She ought to be paid.

LEONARD. Of course she ought. We ought all to be paid. I'm in favour of handsome incomes all round and I hope Lloyd George will take it up. But, look here, Mrs. Greaves, we're all in the same boat. Now is there anything you'd like to pawn? I'm treating you as a friend.

MARY. There's your watch.

LEONARD. There's my watch. My wife suggests my watch. A nuisance to me, of course. As a friend, Mrs. Greaves, what do you say to that?

MRS. GREAVES. I should be sorry, sir, but I must have my money.

LEONARD. You shall have it with compound interest at 5 per cent. Do you know what that means?

MRS. GREAVES. I think so.

LEONARD. It's more than you can get safely elsewhere, so it means that the longer we keep you out of your money the more it will be to your advantage.

MRS. GREAVES. I think you're a funny gentleman.

LEONARD. [*to* MARY.] She's found me out.

MARY. Mrs. Greaves, we've got some money coming in a day or two. At least I think so. But I'm anxious about the baby and I must have some for it. I will pay you. I will.

MRS. GREAVES. Can you give me a little?

MARY. Yes, you shall have something to-morrow.

MRS. GREAVES. I think I know of an old perambulator.

MARY. Do you? Could we borrow it? We'd pay when we could.

MRS. GREAVES. I'll see.

MARY. Thank you, Mrs. Greaves.

MRS. GREAVES. I don't want to be hard.

MARY. You've been very kind.

MRS. GREAVES. P'raps there'd be no harm in letting the doctor have a look at the baby.

MARY. Do you think so? Do you think he's—

MRS. GREAVES. He looks a little bit peaked.

MARY. You know about babies, too, don't you?

MRS. GREAVES. I should do. I've had seven of my own.

MARY. We'll have the doctor. And thank you, Mrs. Greaves.

MRS. GREAVES. I've been a bit soft, I know that.

She goes out.

MARY. Will you sell your watch, then, or pawn it?

LEONARD. Oh!

MARY. And will you bring the doctor first?

LEONARD. Now, is that necessary?

MARY. And we must have some money for her to-morrow.

LEONARD. You choked her off very well. I can't keep serious enough.

MARY. She must have it.

LEONARD. Where's all this money to come from?

MARY. There's your watch. I've not many things. Some of my clothes could go. I can't lose my wedding-ring. [*She moves towards the door.*]

LEONARD. Where are you going?

MARY. I'm going to look at him.

LEONARD. Wait a moment. This is getting serious. I'll write to my mother again. I'll ask her to come. It's absurd. He thinks he's teaching me a lesson. I suppose he is. Mary, do you remember exactly what he said that

day—I mean about the three hundred pounds? The old man's very particular about keeping his word. That sort of people always are.

MARY. Aren't you?

LEONARD. Shall I explain to you what a promise is?

MARY. I know.

LEONARD. Ah! Yes. It would spoil you to understand these things; and I'm losing all my lightness of touch. I was rather stupid just now with Mrs. Greaves. I didn't handle it well.

MARY. You must go to your father and tell him how we are. It's different now I'm frightened about little Leonard. I'll go if you don't. I can get milk. I don't want to do it, but if I must I will.

LEONARD. Milk!

MARY. You heard her say that Mr. Whales wouldn't let us have any more. George Truefit will let me have some.

LEONARD. George Truefit?

MARY. Yes, I shall be ashamed to go to him, but I'll do it.

LEONARD. I had forgotten about George Truefit.

MARY. I hadn't.

LEONARD. My rival, the milkman, isn't he?

MARY. Yes, he's a milkman.

LEONARD. There's something rather piquant in this. I wonder whether George Truefit would appreciate it. I suppose he wouldn't poison the milk?

MARY. Poison the milk!

LEONARD. No, I am getting a bit heavy-handed. That's stupid. What is he like? What's George like?

MARY. He's—he's—you know where you've got him.

LEONARD. A fine fellow, is he?

MARY. You can trust him.

LEONARD. That's something, isn't it?

MARY. A good deal.

LEONARD. [*sharply.*] Now, now, now. You're contrasting him with me. You're thinking that I can't be trusted. You mustn't do that. Weren't you, now?

MARY. I was thinking of you both.

LEONARD. You're married to me, Mary.

MARY. I'm not complaining.

LEONARD. Do you love me, Mary?

MARY. [*after a short pause.*] Sometimes I think I do.

LEONARD. Do you think I love you?

MARY. Do you?

LEONARD. Sometimes *I* think I do. I'm a bit afraid of you, though.

MARY. Of me? Afraid?

LEONARD. I'm afraid of the truth. I'm afraid of the hardness at the back of things. I like ideas and changes and poses and all the rest of it. You make me uneasy.

MARY. I shall never understand you.

LEONARD. I think you understand me very well. It's only the things I say you don't understand. Poor girl. I bewilder you. You're quite right. I'm what you see. You keep thinking you don't understand and that I may be better than that. You're a brave, humble person. By God! There's no one like you. I wish I was different. I wish I was like George Truefit.

MARY. Only a little bit like him. Yourself, too.

LEONARD. What must I do to be saved?

MARY. Now, you're talking queer again.

LEONARD. What is it you want? I see you watching me anxiously sometimes. I can't make myself into another person, but I'd like to please you. What do you want me to do?

MARY. I suppose it's a lot of little things.

LEONARD. Yes, yes. Can you tell me some of them?

MARY. While we're talking here you might have gone for the doctor.

LEONARD. The doctor?

MARY. You forget him. You often forget all about little Leonard. [*Rising.*] I must go to him.

LEONARD. Ah! Yes. Mrs. Greaves said he was peaked. Peaked! Good word, isn't it? Shakespeare has it, you know: "Shall he dwindle, peak and pine"—

MARY. But you don't think he's pining, do you?

LEONARD. No, no. I'm only quoting the poet.

MARY. Why do you say things like that—just to amuse yourself—and you might know they frighten me? That's it. You don't think of other people—except now and then when you seem to get interested.

LEONARD. I'll go for the doctor.

MARY. Yes. Thank you.

LEONARD. Anything else I can do?

MARY. Would they trust us for Lubbock's food?

LEONARD. I'll pawn my watch.

MARY. Wait. We'll see what the doctor says.

LEONARD. Well, I won't be five minutes.

MARY. Thank you very much indeed.

LEONARD. No, my dear girl, don't put it like that. [*There is a ring at the front door bell.*] Any one for us, I wonder.

MARY. Oh! I must tell you. My mother might come. My father will come too, but he couldn't get off now.

LEONARD. Of course you've got parents, too, haven't you?

MARY. Don't you ever think of that?

LEONARD. But where have they been all this time?

MARY. They didn't know where I lived.

LEONARD. They could have got the address from my mother.

MARY. I wrote and told them I'd gone to Canada. I felt I couldn't face them then.

LEONARD. And now?

MARY. My mother knows a lot about babies. I want

to see her. You won't like them, I'm afraid. I think some one's coming in.

LEONARD. Oh! I'm sure I shall find them quite amusing. No, I don't mean that. I mean interesting. Interesting; that's what I mean when I say amusing. They're coming up.

MARY. That's my father's voice.

LEONARD. Let's see—what does he do?

MARY. He's a cabman.

LEONARD. Heavens! Are there such things still! A growler or what?

The door opens and MRS. GREAVES *ushers in* MR. *and* MRS. BROOME. *He is dingily arrayed, but confronts misfortunes with a slightly defiant air. She is a rather sharp, quiet woman, shabbily dressed. She does not display much tenderness to her daughter, but regards her with some solicitude.* MRS. GREAVES *watches the greetings curiously before retiring.*

MARY. [*after kisses from father and mother.*] This is my husband.

There is some rather stiff hand-shaking.

MARY. Sit down, mother.

LEONARD. Sit down, Mr. Broome.

MARY. Baby's not very well, as I told you, mother, and he's just off for the doctor. [*To* LEONARD.] Will you go?

LEONARD. Yes, certainly.

BROOME. Is he coming back?

LEONARD. Good, Mr. Broome, good. You read my thoughts.

BROOME. What?

LEONARD. I was just wondering whether I was coming back. How soon, I mean.

BROOME. Well, it'd only be polite—and you've nothing to do, it seems? You're out of a job too?

MARY. Are you, father?

MRS. BROOME. [*bitterly*.] Ay, they've chucked him at last.

MARY. When?

MRS. BROOME. Only yesterday.

BROOME. [*with gloomy joviality to* LEONARD.] So there's two on us at a loose end.

LEONARD. [*politely*.] Yes, we ought to see something of one another, Mr. Broome. But I'm not exactly out of a job. I've never been in one.

BROOME. Oh! A gentleman of means.

LEONARD. Without means, Mr. Broome, without means.

BROOME. Then you've got some one to keep you.

LEONARD. No, Mr. Broome. No.

BROOME. Then how are you going to get along?

LEONARD. That's just what's been bothering us.

BROOME. You're a cool customer.

LEONARD. And how do you propose to get along, Mr. Broome?

BROOME. It's them bloomin' taxis that's done for me.

MARY. Can't you drive one, father?

BROOME. They wouldn't give me a try if I wanted. And I don't want. I wouldn't touch the things.

LEONARD. You've had the bad luck to be attached to a decaying industry.

BROOME. Decaying my eye! There's no call for it to decay.

LEONARD. You don't hold with modern notions—progress and things, Mr. Broome?

BROOME. I don't hold with taxis. They'll find out their mistake.

MRS. BROOME. He will talk like that.

BROOME. And so would you if you'd druv a cab twenty-nine years.

MARY. But the taxis go faster, father, and you've only got to pay the same.

BROOME. Never mind that. Why should they injure a established trade? Why should they spoil other trades? What's a country without its trades?

MRS. BROOME. That's the way he talks.

BROOME. Mark my words. They'll find out their mistake. Look what's coming to the breed of horses. Look at nosebags.

LEONARD. Nosebags?

BROOME. Ay. I've been told of a firm as used to turn out a matter of two hundred nosebags a week and now they don't do fifty.

MRS. BROOME. He may get taken on at a mews.

BROOME. Mews's days are numbered.

LEONARD. The young generation is knocking at our doors, Mr. Broome.

BROOME. What?

LEONARD. Yours is an interesting type of Conservatism.

BROOME. I'm not a Conservative. I'm a Radical.

MRS. BROOME. You voted Tory last time.

BROOME. Yes, and what have they done for me? I don't hold with Socialism, but I may be druv to it.

MRS. BROOME. We came to hear about you, Mary.

BROOME. And what's your perfession, sir, if I may ask?

LEONARD. Well, it's rather hard to define, Mr. Broome. What am I, Mary?

MARY. He writes things.

BROOME. What things?

LEONARD. Well, shall we say—sketches, critical impressions, verses, even stories.

BROOME. Hardly work for a man, is it?

MARY. Now—father!

LEONARD. Perhaps not. You see, Mr. Broome, you and I are at the opposite ends. Without offence, I hope, I referred to yours as a decaying industry. With me it's the other way. They're not ready for me.

BROOME. It don't pay?

LEONARD. At present it can hardly be said to pay.

BROOME. Well, you can lend me a couple of sovereigns, anyhow?

MARY. } [*together.*] { Father!
MRS. BROOME. } { Nonsense.

LEONARD. I should be charmed, Mr. Broome, but I haven't got them. I was just wondering whether I might borrow five pounds from you.

BROOME. Right. I just wanted to know how the land lies—

MARY. [*to* LEONARD.] Won't you go for the doctor now?

LEONARD. Yes, I will. [*He takes his hat.*]

MARY. You'll come back with him?

LEONARD. Yes, if he can come. Good-bye for the present, Mrs. Broome. [*He goes out airily.*]

MRS. BROOME. Good-bye, sir. A cheerful young man. Now, my dear, perhaps you'll explain.

MARY. I'm not going to explain much, mother.

MRS. BROOME. Then explain a little.

MARY. I told you most of what I'm going to tell you.

MRS. BROOME. Let's have the other bit.

BROOME. What I want to know is—Are you married?

MARY. Yes, I am.

BROOME. Prove it.

MARY. My word's good enough.

MRS. BROOME. Have you gone to Canada?

MARY. That's different.

MRS. BROOME. One lie's very like another.

MARY. There's my ring. [*Showing it.*]

MRS. BROOME. Any one can get a ring. Have you got your marriage lines?

BROOME. Ay, let's see the marriage lines.

MARY. I think you ought to take my word.

MRS. BROOME. Let's see them.

MARY. I wouldn't but that I told you that lie about Canada. It's the first I've ever told you, mother.

MRS. BROOME. That's what frightens me.

BROOME. Where are they ?

MARY. They're in my purse. [*She goes to drawer and brings out the purse.*] There's nothing else in it.

MRS. BROOME. They're better than money.

MARY. Here then. [*She gives them the paper, which they scrutinise together.*]

MRS. BROOME. That's all right, John ?

BROOME. Ay, that seems all right. [MRS. BROOME *takes the paper from him and gives it to* MARY.]

MRS. BROOME. Put it away.

BROOME. Here, let's have another look at it.

MRS. BROOME. Put it away. She's shown it us all right.

BROOME. When was that baby born ?

MRS. BROOME. Never mind that.

BROOME. How old is it ?

MRS. BROOME. What do you call him, Mary ?

MARY. Leonard, like his father.

MRS. BROOME. Is his father kind to you ?

MARY. Yes.

BROOME. Of course she'd say that. I'll have a talk with that young man. I never thought a daughter of mine—

MRS. BROOME. Now shut up.

BROOME. Oh ! yes. Take his part. Never mind me. Never mind my feelings. Do you mean to say this young toff's got no money, really ?

MARY. He's been brought up not to work and his father won't give him any now.

BROOME. Ah ! I see—I see. Vexed about this, was he ? And the young chap did the right thing. Well—a good-hearted lad, I see.

MARY. I won't talk about it. I've been miserable not to come to see you, mother, but I couldn't at first, and time went on and I didn't like to. And I didn't know what to do.

MRS. BROOME. Never mind that now.

A ring at the door bell is heard.

MARY. That can't be the doctor yet.

MRS. BROOME. You don't have a many visitors, I s'pose?

MARY. I don't have any—except sometimes Mrs. Timbrell.

MRS. BROOME. P'raps it's her.

MARY. I'd like you to see her.

MRS. BROOME. Some one's coming up.

MARY. I think it must be.

MRS. TIMBRELL. [*outside.*] I know the way, thank you.

She enters carrying a little bunch of flowers.

MARY. Here's my mother and father.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Oh! how-d'ye-do. [*She shakes hands.*] I don't know why we've never met before.

BROOME. We've never been here before.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Haven't you? I've not been many times. We must come oftener. [*She smiles embarrassments away.*]

BROOME. Of course. I see, ma'am, that you're not like to think as your son and my daughter's a fair match, but I tell you—

MRS. BROOME. Now, John.

MRS. TIMBRELL. It's a very good match for him.

BROOME. Eh?

MRS. TIMBRELL. He's lucky to marry such a girl as Mary.

BROOME. He's not up to much himself, isn't he?

MRS. TIMBRELL. I didn't say that.

BROOME. He seems to be kep' rather short of brass.

MRS. TIMBRELL. [*sees the flowers in her hands.*] Oh! I brought you these, Mary.

MARY. [*takes them.*] Thank you, ma'am. Thank you, Mrs. Timbrell.

BROOME. [*rather truculently.*] That baby'll get a fat lot o' good out o' them.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Is the baby ill, Mary?

MARY. I keep fancying he's not so well. His father's gone for the doctor.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Have you seen him, Mrs. Broome?

MRS. BROOME. Not yet. Will you take me, Mary? We must be going directly.

MARY. Come on, then. [*looking at the others.*] Would you like?—

BROOME. Not me.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Yes, I'd like to see him.

BROOME. I thought, p'raps, you'd just like a word with me, ma'am.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Oh! well—Presently, Mary, I'll just talk to Mr. Broome.

MARY *and* MRS. BROOME *go out.*

Well, Mr. Broome, and what have you got to say?

BROOME. What 'ave I got to say?

MRS. TIMBRELL. You look like a man who has something to say.

BROOME. I've a good deal to say if it's any good saying it. What's it all mean?

MRS. TIMBRELL. Yes, that's the point. Is it any good saying it? That's just what I feel more and more, Mr. Broome. I used to want to say things, and now I say to myself—Is it any good? I believe we think very much alike about it.

BROOME. But a man has his feelings and so he's got somethin' to say.

MRS. TIMBRELL. That's exactly what I think, Mr. Broome. I want to talk to relieve my feelings, not that

I think it will do any good. Least said, soonest mended, I suppose. I agree with you.

BROOME. [*flattered.*] I've no wish to make myself onpleasant, only—

MRS. TIMBRELL. I was sure you hadn't.

BROOME. Only—I want to know how your son—

MRS. TIMBRELL. Hark! Is that somebody coming in? I wonder if he's got the doctor.

BROOME. I'm not one as interferes where there's no call for it, but—

MRS. TIMBRELL. Any one can see that, Mr. Broome.

BROOME. But—I mean to say—what I'm sayin' is—

MRS. TIMBRELL. I believe it is the doctor.

BROOME. I'm on'y a poor cabman. You're too clever for me.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Don't worry your daughter. Don't be always asking her to explain things. Your wife sees that.

BROOME. I'm her father. I think there's something due to me.

MRS. TIMBRELL. That's where we parents make the mistake.

BROOME. Well, I can see a bit and I think the young man has acted fair.

LEONARD *enters.*

LEONARD. Your wife's going, Mr. Broome.

MRS. TIMBRELL. What does the doctor say?

LEONARD. He's just looking at the kid—nothing serious, I think.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Mary's with him, I suppose? [*She goes out slowly.*]

BROOME. Now, sir, I thought I'd just like to have a word with you.

LEONARD. Very natural, very proper, Mr. Broome, I am sure, but you know—

BROOME. I'm only a cabman, but I have my feelin's. I'm a father, sir.

LEONARD. Yes, it's a curious sensation, isn't it?

BROOME. Sir?

LEONARD. It's big, Mr. Broome; it's big, undeniably.

BROOME. What's big?

LEONARD. There's something in these primal relations, you know.

BROOME. I dunno what y're talkin' about.

LEONARD. I beg your pardon.

BROOME. It seems you're my son-in-law.

LEONARD. Yes, of course. Very jolly, isn't it?

BROOME. That doesn't mean as I'm goin' to take liberties. I've had a talk with your mother and we come to an agreement that least said soonest mended, so don't look for no pryin' from me nor my wife. There's a thing or two I don't understand, but I do say this. Whatever mistakes you've made you've come out at the finish like a man.

LEONARD. It's very handsome of you to say so, I'm sure, but—

BROOME. I know a man when I see one and there's my hand on it. [*He offers his hand, which* LEONARD *takes rather hesitatingly.*] You've done the fair thing and I honour you for it.

LEONARD. It's very charming of you, I'm sure, and your commendation is very—very cheering, but, really—

BROOME. I ask no questions but I can see a thing or two. Why, sir, it's as plain to me as if I'd been told that your father's cut up rough about this.

LEONARD. You're quite right.

BROOME. He wouldn't have you marry my gel, and like an hon'rable young feller in love—in love, mind yer—you ups and you sez: I'll marry her so's 'ow. It's as plain as mud—

LEONARD. It does look like that, doesn't it?

BROOME. It's on'y the other day I was readin' a bit

of a novelette in the paper—just to pass the time—and there was a young feller who did just like that, and the father says it's a cut off of a shillin'. I said there's a bit of human natur' there, but I didn't expect to see it in my own family so soon.

LEONARD. You're a reader, Mr. Broome.

BROOME. I've read a fairish bit, sittin' in my keb. Sir, let me tell you—the father in that there novelette come round.

LEONARD. That's encouraging, Mr. Broome.

BROOME. [*listening.*] Is that your mother coming? Give us your hand again. [*He hastily takes* LEONARD'S *hand and poses as* MRS. TIMBRELL, MRS. BROOME *and* MARY *enter. He speaks loudly for* MRS. TIMBRELL'S *benefit.*] I accept you, sir, in my family and I honour you for your handsome conduct, and hoping the old gentleman will soon come round—though, mind you, I ask no questions.

LEONARD. [*retreating.*] Very good of you.

MRS. BROOME. We're going now.

Farewells. BROOME *is hearty again with* LEONARD, *confidential with* MRS. TIMBRELL, *and perfunctory with* MARY. MRS. BROOME, *subdued and a little anxious, passes before* LEONARD *and says:*

You needn't be afraid that we shall come often.

LEONARD. Come as often as you like.

MRS. BROOME. No, we'll give you your chance.

BROOME. What are you talkin' about? [*To* MRS. TIMBRELL.] All right. I'll explain how things are to her, ma'am. I'm glad I come to-day. I think I've cleared up things a bit. Come along, old lady. [BROOME *and* MRS. BROOME *go.*]

LEONARD. You're like me, Mary; you're your mother's child. You're not a bit like your father.

MRS. TIMBRELL. What had you been telling him? Something about your father?

LEONARD. Not a word. He seemed to have got it from you. And is the governor coming round?

MRS. TIMBRELL. Oh! He will come round.

LEONARD. Bravo! That's better. We've been deucedly pinched, you know.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Perhaps it'll do you good. I don't mean you, Mary. Who's that?

MRS. GREAVES *enters with a letter, which she gives to* LEONARD *and retires.*

LEONARD. [*opening the letter.*] Hullo! This is from Cochrane.

MRS. TIMBRELL. [*aside to* MARY.] I brought you this. [*She gives her money.*]

MARY. I can't refuse it now. [*She looks over at* LEONARD *gravely.*]

MARY. He never asked about little Leonard.

LEONARD. I say—look here. Cochrane wants me to go there. Just the thing. Just what I want.

MARY. Where?

LEONARD. His place down in Norfolk. Fishing. Of course the fishing's not much but he's got some rather good men there. By Jove! I see myself talking again. I mean really talking. Just the thing.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Does he ask Mary?

LEONARD. Mary! Well, no. But there's no nonsense of that kind about Mary.

MARY. I've got little Leonard.

LEONARD. [*glancing at her.*] By the by, what did that chap say about little Leonard?

MARY. He's coming in again. He wasn't very sure.

LEONARD. Then you may be sure there's nothing the matter. Good. Things are looking better. [*To his mother.*] Do you think the governor would let me have twenty pounds? Is he far enough round for that?

MRS. TIMBRELL. You'd soon have him back again if you tried.

LEONARD. It's awkward. I must get some things. And I've no fishing-rod. I might say I'd lost it on the way down. I must lose a bag, if necessary, and borrow. Rather thin, though. Did Edgar leave his rod at home? Could you manage ten pounds? What did you give Mary?

MRS. TIMBRELL. Is there any hope for him, Mary?

LEONARD. What? Oh! the baby—I keep forgetting about that blessed baby. But he's not ill. I'm sure he's not ill. Look here! I must get away. I shall hate you, Mary, if you stop me. I want a change, as the doctors say. I want to talk to these chaps. They're men you can talk to. I must go. I must go. I'm a flower turning to the light, I'm a prisoner breaking from his dungeon, I'm a spirit winging upwards. Don't stop me.

MARY. Why should I stop you? You want to be there. I want to be here.

LEONARD. Ah! yes. And if the child is ill you've got a beautiful time before you. A mother with her child ill is lovely, lovely. I could come home to see it. Especially if those fellows get rather dull. Cochrane doesn't mention a time. I wonder how long he'll have me.

MRS. TIMBRELL. If any one could change you, Mary would, but you don't change.

LEONARD. Don't change! I'm always changing. I'm a perfect kaleidoscope.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Always a kaleidoscope.

LEONARD. [*taking his mother by the shoulders.*] You just go and get me some money, will you? Tell the old boy I'm a new man, a reformed character. Put in a good word for Mary. Tell him she's done it. Then see if you can't get fifty pounds out of him.

MRS. TIMBRELL. You'd kill the goose with the golden eggs before it laid any. Mary, we'd better let him go.

MARY. Oh! yes.

MRS. TIMBRELL. You must have some money? What's the least you can manage with?

LEONARD. The least? Well, I should say the least is the most I can get.

MRS. TIMBRELL. [*fingering her rings.*] Have you started with pawnshops yet?

LEONARD. Oh! yes. I'm not afraid of pawnshops.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I'm too old to begin. [*She takes off a ring and gives it to him.*] Take that.

MARY. No, no. He can't do that.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I think he can.

LEONARD. Of course I can. I thought you would understand, Mary. A mother's sacrifice for her son is one of the most beautiful things—just think what you would do for little Leonard.

MARY. Yes, if there's need.

LEONARD. Need? There is need. But I wouldn't like to deprive her of the pleasure. The pleasure! It's a sacred joy. Isn't it, mother?

MRS. TIMBRELL. You're a humbug.

LEONARD. I suppose I am. But I'm your son all the same. You can't be less than a mother because I've got a bit of humbug about me. I wonder if I should do better to sell it out and out to a jeweller. You don't mind, mother?

MRS. TIMBRELL. You couldn't redeem it. You couldn't give it me back.

LEONARD. Do you want it back?

MRS. TIMBRELL. I thought it might be a sacred joy to give it back to me.

LEONARD. Good. Very good. You're a damned fine woman, you know. Isn't she, Mary? I suppose a lot of mothers do the kind of things that she does for their sons, but she does them lightly. She can be witty over it.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Good-bye, Mary. I'll come again soon.

MARY. Good-bye. [MRS. TIMBRELL *goes.* LEONARD *goes out with her for a moment and returns. He capers up to* MARY, *seizes her waist and waltzes her round. She yields and laughs for a moment, then stiffens and struggles.*]

MARY. Hark! There's little Leonard.

LEONARD. Bother little Leonard!

She breaks away and runs out. He does a pas seul *as the curtain falls.*

ACT IV

Two months later. The TIMBRELLS' *drawing-room again. Afternoon.* ADA. *To her enters* SHEILA *in out-door things.*

ADA. Hullo! Sheila.

SHEILA. All alone?

ADA. Mother's somewhere about. Take your things off.

SHEILA. I don't think I'll stop. Ada—

ADA. Well?

SHEILA. Has Leonard come home? Have you heard from him?

ADA. He's coming, I think. Mother's sent him three telegrams.

SHEILA. What good is it now with the child dead and buried?

ADA. He's dreadful, isn't he?

SHEILA. I want to do something for that girl. I want to be different to her. I'm frightened, Ada. I'm frightened of having a child.

ADA. What's she got to do with it?

SHEILA. You must have your conscience clear when you're going to have a child.

ADA. I daresay—only—

SHEILA. We've not been very nice to her, now, have we?

ADA. Well, how could we be?

SHEILA. Yes, we couldn't be expected to receive her with open arms, could we?

ADA. Of course not.

SHEILA. I suppose she is to blame.

ADA. Why, of course she is. She's not as bad as he is, though.

SHEILA. I don't understand things a bit. I don't know right from wrong. Only I ought to have been more kind. It's stupid, Ada, but I'm afraid of it's bringing me bad luck.

ADA. What's made you so superstitious ?

SHEILA. Perhaps you'll understand better some day. Well, I'm going to ask her to tea.

ADA. Oh ! That's all right.

SHEILA. Will you come, too ?

ADA. I don't mind. Yes.

SHEILA. I think Leonard wants whipping.

ADA. It was rather decent of Edgar to go to the funeral.

SHEILA. It was scoring against Leonard, too.

ADA. Well, that's not very nice to your husband.

SHEILA. Oh ! I wish I didn't keep saying things and thinking things against him. He's my child's father ; he's not only my husband.

ADA. Who's coming ?

The maid *shows in* MARY, *who stands near the door for a moment.* SHEILA *goes to her rapidly and kisses her.* MARY *is a little startled and discomposed by this.*

MARY. [*to* ADA.] Is your mother in ?

ADA. [*rather graciously.*] How d'y do, Mary ? [*They shake hands.*] Yes, she's somewhere about. Sit down, won't you ? Er—won't you take your things off ?

MARY. No, thank you. I can't stay long.

ADA. Here's mother, I think. [MRS. TIMBRELL *enters. She and* MARY *greet one another affectionately.*]

MRS. TIMBRELL. Has he come ?

MARY. He hadn't when I left. He's coming. I got a telegram.

MRS. TIMBRELL. What time does he arrive?

MARY. He should be there now.

MRS. TIMBRELL. And you are out? Well, perhaps it's a good idea. Mary, you mustn't judge him by other people. He's queer and different.

MARY. What must I judge him by?

MRS. TIMBRELL. Well, I think you'd better not judge him at all.

MARY. No. It's too late for that now. I've just come to say good-bye.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Good-bye?

SHEILA. Where are you going? [TIMBRELL *enters.*]

TIMBRELL. Ah! Mary. [*They shake hands.*] Glad to see you. You've had a trying time. Where's Leonard? Home yet?

MARY. He's coming.

TIMBRELL. Yes. Well, Sheila, how are you? Yes. I wanted to have a word with you, Mary. I've heard from Leonard. I've had quite a long letter from him. And a very proper letter in the circumstances. Of course, he did very wrong. He acknowledges that. Undoubtedly he ought to have been there. He does make certain explanations and apologies. He expresses himself to me in a suitable manner. Now, Mary, I have been talking to Mrs. Timbrell and we wish you to understand that we are pleased with you. We think that as far as you can—according to your lights—you have made him a good wife. You've had rather a hard time. Well, I thought it right that there should be what I may call an ordeal—a period of ordeal. I hope we may consider that over and that things may be made a little easier for you. I think after the letter I have received from Leonard that I may say—I think I may say—

MARY. He's very good at writing letters.

TIMBRELL. Yes, yes.

MARY. When little Leonard died he wrote me a beautiful letter.

MRS. TIMBRELL. A beautiful letter!

MARY. It was beautifully expressed.

SHEILA. He's a literary man.

TIMBRELL. Well, well. That's all over.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Here's Leonard.

LEONARD *enters and looks around him. Then he walks up to* MARY *and stands before her.*

LEONARD. I've come to abase myself, Mary.

MARY. You've been a long time in coming.

LEONARD. You don't want a lot of apologies. You know what I am.

MARY. No. I don't want any apologies.

TIMBRELL. Now I think you are wrong there, Mary. He ought to make very ample apologies to you. Of course, he has explained to me the exceptional circumstances of the delay, but still—

MRS. TIMBRELL. The circumstances of the delay! You begin to excuse him now!

LEONARD. Oh! I know. I've been a brute and there's an end of it.

MARY. Yes, there's an end of it.

TIMBRELL. Of course, Mary, we must all recognise that Leonard is quite an eccentric person. I am reluctant to suggest the possibility of—of two — or more — moral standards, but allowance must be made for exceptional temperament.

LEONARD. Very liberal, sir. Very liberal and enlightened. [*Turning to* MARY *again.*] There are some things I hate. All that undertaking business. Black clothes and dark rooms and nodding plumes. Remember that. They're horrible to me.

MARY. There are things that I hate, too.

LEONARD. If I could have come in time to see the

little lad it would have been different. But I like to think of him as alive and happy. I've all sorts of charming memories of him—of him with you, Mary.

MARY. Yes. You said so in your letter.

LEONARD. I've thought about you a great deal.

MARY. I find it hard to believe that.

LEONARD. I'm a curious kind of brute. I'm rotten with egoism. It startles me to come back to you and find you so steady and calm. I'd nearly forgotten what you are like. I wish you'd denounce me or curse me or something.

MARY. It's no use doing that now.

LEONARD. And how are we all getting on together? All a happy family? I believe it's you that will unite us yet, Mary.

TIMBRELL. I've got to talk with you about a few arrangements. And I should like to say before you, Leonard, that your mother and I have come to the conclusion that you owe a great deal to your wife and that her influence is a beneficent one. We are pleased—very much pleased—

LEONARD. What is it you're thinking about, Mary? There's something inscrutable in you. It seems to me that we're just as uncomfortable as ever. Mother, let's have a little motherliness or something. I don't know how it is but I want cheering up. I came from the station most penitentially in a growler—an ancient fourwheeler. It made me think of your father, Mary. How is that good man? Got a job all right? By the by, there's an extraordinary upset at our place. I wanted to ask you about that. A lot of tin trunks with cords round them and things. Are we leaving? Are we going away?

MARY. I'm going away.

LEONARD. } [*together.*] { You are!
TIMBRELL. } { Going away!
MRS. TIMBRELL. } { Mary!

MARY. I'm going to call for the boxes and things when I leave here.

LEONARD. Mary, where are you going?

MARY. [*looking steadily at him.*] To Canada.

LEONARD. Alone?

MARY. No.

TIMBRELL. What? What's that?

MARY. [*still looking at* LEONARD.] I'm going with George Truefit.

LEONARD. Don't do that, Mary. Don't do that.

TIMBRELL. What do you mean? George Truefit?

LEONARD. You are leaving me to go with George Truefit?

MARY. Yes.

LEONARD. Can you do that? Can you really do that?

MRS. TIMBRELL. Don't be hasty, Mary. Think about this.

TIMBRELL. Do you mean to say— Who is George Truefit?

MRS. TIMBRELL. He was our milkman. He gave us notice a few weeks ago that he was going out of the business.

LEONARD. In order to elope with Mary? Did he mention that?

TIMBRELL. Do you mean that you are leaving your husband and going away with this person?

MARY. Yes.

TIMBRELL. I can't believe it. I can't understand it.

LEONARD. Mary, I'd like to talk to you about this.

MARY. I'll hear what you have to say.

LEONARD. Not here. Not now. I want you alone.

MARY. It's only reasons I want. You can give those here.

LEONARD. Mother, talk to her.

MRS. TIMBRELL. You've startled me, Mary. It seems very dreadful.

MARY. I'm sorry, ma'am.

TIMBRELL. [*to* LEONARD.] Confound you, sir, are you going to let your wife go like this?

LEONARD. [*he knows in his heart that* MARY *will not be shaken, and his efforts to retain her seem perfunctory.*] What do I do? What's the right thing? Must I call out Truefit? Or assassinate him? Is there such a person? He sounds to me like a myth or a symbol or something. Mary, will you swear that there is a George Truefit?

MARY. I'll swear that.

LEONARD. This is the strangest thing that has ever happened to me.

MARY. I thought it would surprise you.

LEONARD. But, Mary, you're my wife.

MARY. Yes. That's what I don't like about it.

LEONARD. I did wrong to stay away from you. I acknowledge it. I feel it. I'm going to be good. I'll try. I'm going to be a good husband. I don't want you to go. It was dreadful of me to stay away when the little kiddie died. I'm not like that. I'm not like the things I do.

MARY. After all, you wrote a beautiful letter.

LEONARD. [*despairingly to the Universe.*] She's taking to irony now.

SHEILA. [*she has approached* MARY *rather timidly and stands beside her.*] Don't go, Mary.

MARY. Oh! Miss Sheila!

SHEILA. I want you to stay. I do. And I'm so sorry about everything.

MARY. Oh! I must. Thank you—thank you. I must.

SHEILA. [*to* MRS. TIMBRELL.] Won't you stop her?

MRS. TIMBRELL. I don't know how.

TIMBRELL. Perhaps I may have a few words with this young woman. I think I am entitled to a few words.

Now, I don't wish to be harsh with you. Far from it. I had formed—I was forming a high opinion of your character—of some phases of it. I was prepared, as I think I have said, to accept you—to have overlooked the deplorable incident which—I will say no more about that. My son has been rather unfeeling, perhaps. I don't defend him. He is anxious to make amends. I must remind you that at a time when—that I insisted on his making reparation. It was an unusual course. I conceived it to be my duty. Later I found it necessary in certain painful circumstances to impose what I may call an ordeal. It is over. I am willing to be lenient. I should propose, if your husband remains reasonably—what shall I say?—steady, to make your pecuniary position a much easier one. Now, my good girl, I hope we shall have no more of this nonsense. I can overlook a slip—an error due to—an error of—of youth, but not a deliberate infringement of—are you listening to what I say?

MARY. I beg your pardon, sir. I was thinking it was time I was off.

TIMBRELL. Oh! This is abominable.

MARY. It's no good your talking, sir. I've made up my mind.

TIMBRELL. And does he—this person—this Truefit know the whole of the extraordinary circumstances?

MARY. I've told him everything.

TIMBRELL. Where is he? I'll see him.

MARY. You won't move George Truefit.

LEONARD. I should like to see him. I don't mean to talk and argue and all that. And I don't want to break his head. But I should like to have a look at him through a keyhole or something.

TIMBRELL. Manly talk.

LEONARD. Mary, do you like him better than me?

MARY. It's not the same thing.

LEONARD. It's deuced interesting if one weren't so

close to it. As it is I feel rather uncomfortable. Unmanly. Yes, I suppose so. I suppose things are easy for these manly people. They just go to work with an axe. But how do I know that she isn't right? Mary, I'm horribly uncomfortable. I'm unhappy. I seem to be losing something. Yes, really losing something. Are you quite sure about George Truefit?

MARY. Yes, I'm sure about him.

LEONARD. And yourself? Do you think you'll never want to come back? To me, you know?

TIMBRELL. To you or to fifty others.

MRS. TIMBRELL. No—no.

LEONARD. Oh! he doesn't understand.

TIMBRELL. Understand! I understand that this is an abandoned woman. You are well rid of her. I've been mistaken. Yes, I made a mistake. She has been treated with some magnanimity. [*Snappishly to* LEONARD.] Not by you. Let her go, then, to her life of infamy.

MRS. TIMBRELL. For shame!

TIMBRELL. Silence!

MARY. It's no good my talking here, but I'd like you to understand, ma'am.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I do understand.

SHEILA. Don't go.

LEONARD. No. Don't go.

MARY. I must go. I can't throw over George Truefit.

LEONARD. You are throwing me over.

MARY. That doesn't matter. That's another thing.

LEONARD. Oh! Is it? Why?

MARY. It was all wrong from the beginning. I brought it on myself. I'm sorrier for my mother than any one. She told me there were men like you. I wouldn't have gone if little Leonard had lived. Not if I'd had to leave him. But now George Truefit and I have talked it over and we think we see what's right. It can't be right, but it's not so wrong as other things.

LEONARD. Mary, do you love George Truefit?

MARY. Now, that's what I've said to myself sometimes. And people talk of love, and stories are full of it. I can't make out rightly what it is. Did you love me when first— They talk about a mother loving. Well—little Leonard—are they the same? If that's love I don't love George. But I want to be sure of things. I want things to last. I want to feel that I'm faithful and true. It's strange for me to be running away from my husband for that. I'm not one of the kind that does it. It's funny that I'm leaving you because I want to be a proper wife. P'raps I'm all wrong. It's hard for a girl like me, not very clever, to make out things. It's all been very unusual. I may be wrong, but I can't help it.

MRS. TIMBRELL. You are not wrong, Mary.

TIMBRELL. This is madness. Are you going to justify her now?

LEONARD. Ah! You don't understand this, sir. It's a little out of your line.

TIMBRELL. I hope it is out of my line, sir. I trust it is.

MRS. TIMBRELL. When are you going, Mary?

MARY. We sail to-morrow.

LEONARD. I suppose the magnanimous thing would be for me to see you off.

MARY. No. I'll say good-bye here. [*To* MRS. TIMBRELL.] I'm sorry to leave you, ma'am.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Good luck, Mary.

MARY. There'll be no questions asked there. I shall leave it all behind. I should be ashamed here. I've felt so all the time. Why! Mrs. Greaves thought I wasn't married. And I never felt as if I was, properly. Of course it's wrong, but I can't be right now whatever I do. It isn't as if I'd been straight all the time. Somehow that does make me feel a bit freer now. If I'm wrong it's the best I can do.

TIMBRELL. [*angrily to* LEONARD.] Do you mean to tell me that you're going to submit to this?

LEONARD. I don't see that a scrap with George Truefit would help much. I've lost Mary. That's plain.

TIMBRELL. Well, well. I've no more to say.

LEONARD. It has been an extraordinarily interesting episode. The most stimulating thing that ever happened to me. I must thank you for that, Mary.

MRS. TIMBRELL. [*turning suddenly on* LEONARD.] Doesn't it hurt you? Can you get outside it like that?

LEONARD. Oh! Yes. It hurts me splendidly.

TIMBRELL. Your conduct is despicable, sir. The man who allows his wife to leave him is not a man.

LEONARD. [*snappishly.*] Oh! Don't talk rubbish. Your wife left you long ago. She never came to you. You've never had a wife.

TIMBRELL. I don't understand you. I don't want to understand you. I pray that I may never understand you.

LEONARD. Of course you don't want to understand. That's just it. I think sometimes that people like you are just as intelligent as we are but you're timid, you daren't let your thoughts stray, you have secrets from yourselves. Well, mother, I shall have to look to you now Mary's gone.

MRS. TIMBRELL. I can do nothing for you. You've ceased to be a child.

LEONARD. To him—to my father— Yes. Not to you.

MRS. TIMBRELL. Yes. You know too much. You can only pretend to be my child.

LEONARD. I'm to be alone, then. Mary, I shall be quite alone.

MARY. I daresay you'll pick up somebody.

LEONARD. You've no sentiment at all.

MARY. I must go. Good-bye, ma'am.

MARY *and* MRS. TIMBRELL *embrace.* MARY *moves toward the door. The others, with the exception of* TIMBRELL, *follow her,* LEONARD *slowly and wistfully. They go out, meeting* EDGAR, *who stares at them in some astonishment but without greeting and advances to his father.*

EDGAR. What's this ?

TIMBRELL. [*testily.*] What's what ?

EDGAR. Some sort of family reconciliation ?

TIMBRELL. Just the reverse.

EDGAR. They seemed to be saying good-bye to her.

TIMBRELL. She's gone.

EDGAR. Gone ?

TIMBRELL. Take care Sheila doesn't go.

EDGAR. Sheila ?

TIMBRELL. Perhaps she's gone already.

EDGAR. What do you mean ?

TIMBRELL. I've been listening to the ravings of lunacy and they've affected my brain. I'm getting old. Do you ever have any doubt about yourself, Edgar ? Do you ever think you're a fool ?

EDGAR. No, I don't think I'm a fool.

TIMBRELL. Neither am I.

EDGAR. But what is it ? What's been going on ?

THE CURTAIN FALLS

RUTHERFORD AND SON

GITHA SOWERBY

PLAYS by GITHA SOWERBY

RUTHERFORD AND SON.
(Published by Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd., 1912.)

BEFORE BREAKFAST (one act).
Produced at the Playhouse, London, 1912.

A MAN AND SOME WOMEN.
Produced at the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester, 1914.

SHEILA.
Produced at the St. James's Theatre, London, 1917.

THE STEPMOTHER.
Produced by the Play Actors, London, 1924.

RUTHERFORD AND SON

was produced at the Court Theatre, under the management of Mr. J. H. Leigh, on January 31, 1912, with the following cast :—

JOHN RUTHERFORD . . .	Norman McKinnel.
JOHN (his sons) . . .	Edmund Breon.
RICHARD (his sons) . . .	Frank Randell.
JANET (his daughter) . . .	Edyth Olive.
ANN (his sister)	Agnes Thomas.
MARY (young John's wife) . .	Thyrza Norman.
MARTIN	A. S. Homewood.
MRS. HENDERSON . . .	Agnes Hill.

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RUTHERFORD AND SON

ACT I

JOHN RUTHERFORD'S *house stands on the edge of the moor, far enough from the village to serve its dignity and near enough to admit of the master going to and from the Works in a few minutes—a process known to the household as "going across". The living-room, in which the family life has centred for generations, is a big square room furnished in solid mahogany and papered in red, as if to mitigate the bleakness of a climate that includes five months of winter in every year. There is a big table in the middle of the room covered with a brown cloth at which the family take their meals. An air of orderliness pervades the room, which perhaps accounts for its being extremely uncomfortable. From above the heavy polished sideboard the late* JOHN RUTHERFORD *looks down from his frame and sees the settle and arm-chair on either side of the fire, the marble clock on the mantelpiece, the desk with its brass inkstand and neatly arranged bundles of papers precisely as he saw them in life.*

On this particular evening in December ANN RUTHERFORD *is sitting by the fire alternately knitting and dozing. She is a faded, querulous woman of about sixty, and wears a black dress with a big flat brooch and a cap with lilac ribbons.* MARY RUTHERFORD, *a gentle delicate-looking woman of twenty-six, is seated on the settle opposite to her making a baby's cap; she is bending forward to catch the light of the*

fire on her work, for the lamp has not yet been brought in.

Presently JANET *comes in carrying a silver basket and a pair of carpet slippers. She is a heavy dark woman, some ten years older than* MARY, *with an expressionless tired face and monotonous voice. All her movements are slipshod and aimless, and she seldom raises her eyes. She is dressed in a dark dress of some warm material with white collar and cuffs.*

JANET. [*glancing at the clock.*] He's not back yet.

ANN. No. . . If you mean your father.

JANET. [*folding up the brown cloth preparatory to laying the table.*] Who else should I mean?

ANN. You might mean any one. . . You always talk about he and him, as if there was no one else in the house.

JANET. There isn't.

ANN. Answer me back, that's the way. [JANET *makes no reply. She puts the silver basket on the table and comes to the fire with the slippers.*] There—put his slippers down to warm. The Committee room's cold as ice, and he'll come in like the dead.

MARY. [*looking up from her work for a moment.*] I believe it's going to freeze to-night—the chimneys are flaring so.

JANET *drops the shoes one by one on to the hearthrug without stooping.*

ANN. They'll never warm there! I never seed sic a feckless lass. [*Stoops laboriously and sets them up against the fender.*] Is the dinner all right?

JANET. Susan's let the pie get burnt, but I've scraped the top off—he won't notice. The girdle cake's as tough as leather. She'll have to do a fresh one—if there's time.

ANN. You might ha' seen to things a bit.

JANET. I have. There wouldn't ha' been a pie at all if I hadn't. The oven damper's gone wrong.

ANN. Answer me—answer yer aunt! You and your dampers—and there you are a-laying the table and ye know weel enough yer father's forbid you to do things like a servant.

JANET. What else is there to do? I can't sit and sew all day.

ANN. I'm sure I'm never done finding fault from morning to night with one thing and another.

JANET. Don't then.

ANN. And a nice thing if I didn't! Nothing ever done in the house unless I see to it—that's what it comes to.

JANET. [*spreading the cloth.*] You'll drop your stitches.

ANN. You never stir yourself, nor Mary neither, for that matter.

MARY. I can't do much else with Tony to look after, Miss Rutherford.

JANET. There's no need for her to do anything. It's not her business.

ANN. Nor anybody's business, it seems to me. [*Subsiding.*] I don't know what's come to Susan nowadays, she's that daft—a head like a sieve, and that clumsy-handed.

JANET. Susan's got a man.

ANN. Well, I never!

JANET. That's what she says. It's one of the men at the Works. He hangs about on his way home from the night-shift—when she ought to be doing the rooms. . . Susan's happy . . that's why she forgot to take the milk out of the can. There's no cream for the pudding.

ANN. And he's so particular about his cream.

JANET. He'll have to do without for once. And what with the pie burnt—and the girdle cake like leather, if he comes in before the other's ready—I should think we'll have a fair evening.

She leaves the room.

ANN. Eh, dearie—dearie. Sic doings!

MARY. [*absorbed in her cap.*] Never mind, Miss Rutherford.

ANN. Never mind! It's well for you to talk.

MARY. Janet 'll see that it's all right. She always does, though she talks like that.

ANN. Her and her sulky ways. There's no doing anything with her of late. She used to be bad enough as a lass, that passionate and hard to drive. She's ten times worse now she's turned quiet.

MARY. Perhaps she's tired with the long walks she takes. She's been out nearly two hours this afternoon in the rain.

ANN. [*turning to her knitting.*] What should she have to put her out—except her own tempers?

MARY. [*trying to divert her attention.*] Miss Rutherford, look at Tony's cap; I've nearly finished it.

ANN. [*still cross.*] It's weel enough. Though what he wants wi' a lot o' bows standing up all over his head passes me.

MARY. They're butterfly bows.

ANN. Butterfly bows! And what'll butterfly bows do for 'n? They'll no keep his head warm.

MARY. But he looks such a darling in them. I'll put it on to-morrow when I take him out, and you'll see.

ANN. London ways—that's what it is.

MARY. Do north-country babies never have bows on their caps?

ANN. Not in these parts. And not the Rutherfords anyway. Plain and lasting—that's the rule in this family, and we bide by it, babies and all. But you can't be expected to know, and you like a stranger in the hoose.

JANET *comes in carrying a lamp and a loaf on a trencher, which she puts on the table.*

MARY. I've been here nearly three months.

ANN. And this very night you sit wasting your time

making a bit trash fit for a monkey at a fair. A body would think you would ha' learned better by now.

JANET. [*quietly*.] What's the matter with Mary now?

ANN. We can talk, I suppose, without asking your leave?

JANET. It was you that was talking. Let her be.

ANN. And there you've been and put the loaf on as if it was the kitchen—and you know weel enough that gentlefolk have it set round in bits.

JANET. Gentlefolk can do their own ways.

She goes out to fetch the knives.

ANN. [*she gets up laboriously and goes to the table.*] I'll have to do it myself as usual.

She cuts the bread and sets it round beside the plates.

MARY. [*who has gone to the window and is looking out at the winter twilight.*] If I'm a stranger, it's you that makes me so.

ANN. Ye've no cause to speak so, lass. . . I'm not blamin' you. It's no' your fault that you weren't born and bred in the north country.

MARY. No. I can't change that. . . I wonder what it's like here when the sun shines!

ANN. [*who is busy with the bread.*] Sun?

MARY. It doesn't look as if the summer ever came here.

ANN. If ye're looking for the summer in the middle o' December ye'll no' get it. Ye'll soon get used to it. Ye've happened on a bad autumn for your first, that's all.

MARY. My first.

ANN. Ye're a bit saft wi' livin' in the sooth, nae doubt. They tell me there's a deal of sunshine and wickedness in them parts.

MARY. The people are happier, I think.

ANN. Mebbees. Bein' happy 'll make no porridge.

She goes back to her chair.

MARY. I lived in Devonshire when I was a child, and everywhere there were lanes. But here — it's all so old and stern — this great stretch of moor, and the fells — and the trees — all bent one way, crooked and huddled.

ANN. [*absorbed in her knitting.*] It's the sea-wind that does it.

MARY. The one that's blowing now ?

ANN. Aye.

MARY. [*with a shiver.*] Shall I draw the curtains ?

ANN. Aye.

MARY *draws the curtains. After a silence she speaks again gently.*

MARY. I wonder if you'll ever get used to me enough to—like me ?

ANN. [*with the north-country dislike of anything demonstrative.*] Like you ! Sic a question—and you a kind of a relation.

MARY. Myself, I mean.

ANN. You're weel enough. You're a bit slip of a thing, but you're John's wife, and the mother of his bairn, and there's an end.

MARY. Yes, that's all I am !

She takes up her work again.

ANN. Now you're talking.

MARY. [*sewing.*] Don't think I don't understand. John and I have been married five years. All that time Mr. Rutherford never once asked to see me ; if I had died, he would have been glad.

ANN. I don't say that. He's a proud man, and he looked higher for his son after the eddication he'd given him. You mustn't be thinking such things.

MARY. [*without bitterness.*] Oh, I know all about it. If I hadn't been Tony's mother, he would never have had me inside his house. And if I hadn't been Tony's mother, I wouldn't have come. Not for anything in the world. . .

It's wonderful how he's picked up since he got out of those stuffy lodgings.

ANN. [*winding up her wool.*] Well, Mr. Rutherford's in the right after all.

MARY. Oh yes. He's in the right.

ANN. It's a bitter thing for him that's worked all his life to make a place i' the world to have his son go off and marry secret-like. Folk like him look for a return from their bairns. It's weel known that no good comes of a marriage such as yours, and it's no wonder that it takes him a bit of time to make up his mind to bide it. [*Getting up to go.*] But what's done's done.

Young JOHN RUTHERFORD *comes in while she is speaking. He is delicate-looking and boyish in speech and manner—attractive, in spite of the fact that he is the type that has been made a gentleman of and stopped half-way in the process.*

JOHN. [*mimicking her tone.*] So it is, Aunt Ann. Dinner's late, isn't it?

ANN. He's not back yet. He's past his time. I'm sure I hope nothing's happened.

JOHN. What should have happened?

ANN. Who's to tell that he hasn't had an accident? Things do happen.

JOHN. They do indeed. He may have jumped into a furnace.

ANN. Ah, you may joke. But you never know. You never know.

She wanders out, with the vague intention of seeing to the dinner.

JOHN. Cheery old soul, Aunt Ann. No one's ever five minutes late but she kills and buries them. [*Pause.*] What's she been saying to you?

MARY. [*sewing.*] She's been talking about—us.

JOHN. I should have thought that subject was about threadbare by now. [*Pause.*] What's she say?

MARY. The usual things. How angry your father still is, and how a marriage like ours never comes to good—

JOHN. Oh, rot. Anyway, we needn't talk about it.

She looks quickly up at him and her face changes.

MARY. Some one's always talking about it.

JOHN. Who is?

MARY. Miss Rutherford—any of them. Your father would, if he ever spoke to me at all. He looks it instead.

JOHN. Oh, nonsense; you imagine things. The Guv'nor's like that with us all—it's always been so; besides, he doesn't like women—never notices them. [*Trying to make it all right.*] Look here, I know it's rather beastly for you just now, but it'll be all right in time. Things are going to change, so don't you worry, little woman.

MARY. What are we going to do?

JOHN. Do? What should we do?

MARY. Anything. To get some money of our own. To make some sort of life for ourselves, away from here.

JOHN. You wait till I get this invention of mine set going. As for getting away, please remember it was you who insisted on coming. I never wanted you to.

MARY. I had to come. Tony was always ailing in London.

JOHN. You never left me alone till I'd crawled to the Guv'nor and asked to come back.

MARY. What else was there left to do? You couldn't find work—

JOHN. If you'd had patience and waited, things would have been all right.

MARY. I've waited five years. I couldn't go on earning enough when Tony came.

JOHN. [*sulkily.*] Well, you couldn't expect me to ask the Guv'nor to keep us all three. And if I had stayed in London with you instead of coming back when

he gave me the chance, what good would it have done? I'd have missed the biggest thing of my life—I know that. . . Anyway, I do hate this going back over it all. Beastly, sordid—

MARY. [*looking before her.*] I couldn't go on. I'd done it so long—long before you knew me. Day after day in an office. The crowded train morning and night—bad light—bad food—and because I did that my boy is small and delicate. It's been nothing else all along—the bare struggle for life. I sometimes think that it's the only reality in the world.

JOHN. [*ill-humoured.*] Whether it's the only reality or not, I call it a pretty deadly way of looking at things.

MARY. It is deadly. I didn't know how deadly till I began to care for you and thought it was going to be different.

JOHN. The old story.

MARY. No, no, we won't look back. But oh, John, I do so dreadfully want things for Tony. [JOHN *begins to move about the room.*] I didn't mind when there was only ourselves. But when he was coming I began to think, to look at the other children—children of people in our position in London—taught to work before they'd had time to learn what work means—with the manhood ground out of them before ever it came. And I thought how that was what we had to give our child, you and I. . . When your father forgave you for marrying me, and said you might come here, it seemed like a chance. And there's nothing, nothing—except this place you call home.

JOHN. Hang it all—

MARY. Oh, I know it's big—there's food and warmth, but it's like a prison! There's not a scrap of love in the whole house. Your father!—no one's any right to be what he is—never questioned, never answered back—like God! and the rest of you just living round him

—neither children, nor men and women—hating each other.

JOHN. [*turning to look at her with a sort of wonder.*] Don't exaggerate. Whatever has set you off talking like this?

MARY. Because I'm always thinking about it.

JOHN. You've never had a home of your own, and you don't make excuses for family life—everybody knows it's like that more or less.

MARY. And you've lived with it always—you can't see it as I do.

JOHN. I do see it. And it's jolly unpleasant—I'm not arguing about that—

MARY. Don't you see that life in this house is intolerable?

JOHN. Well, frankly, no, I don't. That is, I don't see why you should find it so. It's all very well to abuse my people, and I sympathise with you in a way—no one dislikes them more than I do. I know Janet's got a filthy temper, and Aunt Ann—well, she hasn't moved on with the rest of us, poor old soul, that's the long and the short of it. As for the Guv'nor—it's no use beginning to apologise for him.

MARY. Apologise!

JOHN. Well, that's about what you seem to expect. I've told you I quite see that it isn't over pleasant for you, and you might leave it at that, I think. You do drive at one so . . and you seem to forget how ill I've been.

MARY. I don't forget. But don't you see we may go on like this for twenty years doing nothing?

JOHN. Do you suppose I wouldn't have done something? do you suppose I didn't mean to do something, if I hadn't been knocked over just at the critical moment? [*Injured.*] Do you suppose I wouldn't rather have been working than lying on my back all these weeks?

MARY. [*quietly.*] How about all the other weeks?

JOHN. Good heavens, what more could I do than I have done? Here have I hit on a thing worth thousands —a thing that any glass-maker would give his ears to have the working of. And you talk to me about making money—and a life of our own. Good Lord! we're going to be rich—rich, once it's set going.

MARY. [*unimpressed.*] Have you told Mr. Rutherford about it?

JOHN. Yes. At least, I've told him what it is. . . I haven't told him how it's done—naturally. . . He won't listen to me—it's like talking to a lump of granite. He'll find he'll have to listen before long. . . I've set Martin on to him.

MARY. Why Martin?

JOHN. Because he helped me to work it out. And because he happens to be the one person in the world the Guv'nor ever listens to.

MARY. [*looking up.*] He trusts Martin, doesn't he? Absolutely.

JOHN. Oh, Lord! yes. Martin can do no wrong. The Guv'nor 'll listen to him all right.

MARY. [*resuming her work.*] When is he going to tell him?

JOHN. Oh, directly he gets a chance. He may have done it already.

MARY. [*putting down her sewing.*] To-day? Then Martin really believes there's something in it?

JOHN. [*indignantly.*] Something in it! My dear Mary, I know you don't mean to be, but you are most fearfully irritating. Here have I told you over and over again that I'm going to make my fortune, and because some one else agrees with me you're kind enough to believe what I say. One would think you had no faith in me.

MARY. [*giving it up as hopeless.*] I'm sorry. We

won't talk of it any more. I've said it all so often—said it till you're sick of hearing it, and it's no good.

JOHN. Mollie, don't be cross. . . I don't mean to be a brute, but it is a bit disappointing, isn't it? when I really have found the right thing at last, to find you so lukewarm about it. Because it really is this time. It'll change everything; and you shall do what you like and enjoy yourself as much as you want to—and forget all about those filthy years in Walton Street. [*He comes to her and puts his arm round her.*] There, don't be a little fool. What are you making?

MARY. A cap for Tony.

JOHN. Dear little beggar, isn't he?

MARY. Yes. . . Don't say things to please me, John.

JOHN. I'm not. I do think he's a dear little beggar. [*Pleased with himself.*] We'll be as happy as kings by and by.

MARY. As happy as we were at first?

JOHN. Happier—we'll have money.

MARY. We couldn't be happier. [*She sits with her hands in her lap, her mouth wistful.*] What a pair of babies we were, weren't we?

JOHN. Oh, I don't know.

MARY. What—blunderers! I thought it was so different—and I daresay you did, too, though you never said so. I suppose it's really true what they think here—that we'd no business to marry and have a child when we'd nothing to give him when he came.

JOHN. What a little worrit you are.

MARY. I do worry, John—you don't know how much.

JOHN. But what about?

MARY. Tony.

JOHN. You funny little thing. Surely there's time enough to think about Tony; he's just four months old.

MARY. Yes, but to me—I suppose every woman thinks about her baby like that—till he's a boy and a

man and a child all in one—only he never grows old. [*In a practical tone.*] How long will it take?

JOHN. How long will what take?

MARY. Your invention. [*Looks up quickly.*] I mean —don't be cross—will it be months—or years before it pays?

JOHN. [*moving away.*] I really can't say—it depends. If the Guv'nor has the sense to see things my way—it depends.

He takes a cigarette.

MARY. I see. You will work at it, won't you? Make it go?

JOHN. [*striking a light.*] There's no work to be done. All I've got to do is to sit down and let some one pay for it.

MARY. Sit down? It means so much to us, doesn't it? Everything—

JOHN. [*who has burnt his finger.*] It means my getting the whip-hand of the Guv'nor for once in my life. [*Irritably.*] And it means my getting away from your incessant nagging at me about the kid—and money.

MARY. John!

JOHN. [*sharply.*] After all, it isn't very pleasant for me having you dependent on the Guv'nor and being reminded of it every other day. I don't choose this kind of life, I can tell you. If you're sick of it, God knows I am.

While he is speaking ANN *drifts into the room again.*

ANN. There you are—smoking again; and you know what the doctor said. Mary, tell him he's not to.

MARY. John must do as he likes.

JOHN. I must have something; my nerves are all on edge.

ANN. Weel, ye can't expect to be right all of a sudden. When I think o' the Sunday night ye was so bad, I never thought to see ye standin' there now.

JOHN. [*injured.*] I shouldn't worry about that. I don't suppose any one would have been much the worse if I had pegged out.

ANN. Whatever makes you say a thing like that?

JOHN. Mary. Yes, you do, Mary. To hear you talk one would think I was no good. How do you suppose I've made an invention if I were the rotter you think me?

MARY. I didn't say that—I didn't say that.

ANN. An invention's weel enough if you're not mistaken.

JOHN. Mistaken!

ANN. Ah, but older people nor you make mistakes. There was old Green—I mind him fiddlin' on wi' a lot of old cogs and screws half his time, trying to find oot the way to prevent a railway train going off the line. And when he did find it and took it to show it to some one as knawed aboot such things, it was so sartin sure not to go off the line that the wheels wouldn't turn roond at all. A poor, half-baked body he was, and his wife without a decent black to show herself in o' Sundays.

JOHN. I'll undertake that my wheels will go round.

ANN. If it's such a wonderful thing, why hasn't some one thought of it afore? Answer me that.

JOHN. You might say that of any new idea that ever came into the world.

ANN. Of course, if you set up to know more about glass-making than your father that's been at it ever since he was a bairn . .

JOHN. It isn't a case of knowing. I've a much better chance because I don't know. It's the duffers who get hold of the best things—stumble over them in the dark, as I did. It makes my blood run cold to think how easily I could have missed it, of all the people who must have looked straight at it time after time, and never seen it. [*Contemptuously.*] Hullo, Dick!

RICHARD RUTHERFORD *has come in from the hall.*

He wears the regulation clergyman's clothes and looks older than JOHN, *though he is in reality the younger by a couple of years. He is habitually overworked, and his face has the rather pathetic look of an overweighted youth that finds life too much for its strength. His manner is extremely simple and sincere, which enables him to use priggish phrases without offence. He comes to the table while* JOHN *is speaking, looks from him to* ANN, *then at the butter, sugar, and bread in turn.*

DICK. [*very tired.*] Dinner?

JOHN. [*mimicking him.*] Not imminent.

DICK. Will it be long?

ANN. [*crossly.*] Ye'll just have to bide quiet till it comes.

DICK. [*gently.*] Ah! . . In that case I think I'll just—

He takes a piece of bread and moves towards the door.

ANN. You look fair done.

DICK. I've had a tiring day. [*To* MARY.] Where is Janet?

MARY. In the kitchen. [*She looks at him intently.*] Why did you ask? Do you want her?

DICK. [*uncertainly.*] No, no. I thought she might have gone out. It's best for her not to go out after dark.

ANN. You can't sit in your room i' this cold.

DICK. I'll put on a coat. It's quiet there.

JOHN. You'll have time to write your sermon before he comes in, I daresay.

DICK. [*simply.*] Oh, I've done that, such as it is.

He leaves the room, eating his bread as he goes.

JOHN. [*irritably.*] This is a damned uncomfortable house. I'm starving.

ANN. It's Committee day.

JOHN. He'll be having the whole Board on his toes as usual, I suppose.

ANN. That Board 'll be the death of him. When I think of the old days when he'd no one to please but himself!

JOHN. He's stood it for five years. I wouldn't—being badgered by a lot of directors who know as much about glass-making as you do.

ANN. That's all very well. But when you borrow money you've got to be respectful one way and another. If he hadn't gone to the Bank how would Rutherford's ha' gone on?

JOHN. [*who has taken up the newspaper and is half reading it as he talks.*] Why should it go on?

ANN. [*sharply.*] What's that?

JOHN. Why didn't he sell the place when he could have made a decent profit?

ANN. [*scandalised.*] Sell Rutherford's? Just you let your father hear you.

JOHN. I don't care if he does. I never can imagine why he hangs on—working his soul out year after year.

ANN. [*conclusively.*] It's his duty!

She resumes her knitting.

JOHN. Duty—rot! He likes it. He's gone on too long. He couldn't stop and rest if he tried. When I make a few thousands out of this little idea of mine I'm going to have everything I want, and forget all about the dirt and the ugliness, the clatter and bang of the machinery, the sickening hot smell of the furnaces—all the things I've hated from my soul.

ANN. [*who has become absorbed in a dropped stitch.*] Aye weel . . there's another strike at Rayner's, they tell me.

JOHN. Yes. Eight hundred men. That's the second this year.

ANN. You don't think it'll happen here, do you?

JOHN. I can't say. They're smashing things at Rayner's.

ANN. It'll no' come here. The men think too much of your father for that.

JOHN. I'm not so sure.

ANN. There was the beginnings of a strike once, years ago, and he stopped it then. The men at the furnaces struck work—said it was too hard for 'n. And your father he went doon into the caves and took his coat off afore them all, and pitched joost half as much coal again as the best of 'em—now!

JOHN. Yes, that's the sort of argument they can see—it catches hold of the brute in them. If the Guv'nor had sat quietly in his office and sent his ultimatum through the usual channels, he would have been the owner of Rutherford's, and the strike would have run its course. Shovelling coal in his shirt with his muscles straining, and the sweat pouring off him, he was "wor John"—and there's three cheers for his fourteen stone of beef and muscle. That was all very well—thirty years ago.

ANN. And what's to hinder it now?

JOHN. Oh, the Guv'nor was a bit of a hero then—an athlete, a runner. The men who worked for him all the week crowded to see him run on Saturday afternoons, Martin's told me. But when all's said and done, Rutherford's is a money-making machine. And the Guv'nor's the only man who doesn't know it. He's getting old.

ANN. [*crossly*.] To hear you talk a body would think we were all going to die to-morrow. Your father's a year younger nor me—now! And a fine up-standing man forbye.

JOHN. [*who is looking at himself in the glass above the mantelpiece*.] Oh, he knows how to manage a pack of savages.

ANN. There's not one of 'em to-day or thirty years ago but 'll listen to him.

JOHN. He'd knock any one down who didn't.

JANET *comes in with a tray and begins to set cups and saucers on the table.*

ANN. They all stood by him when the trouble came, every one of 'em. And he's climbed up steady ever since, and never looked ahint him. And now you've got your invention it'll no be long now—if it's all you think it. Ah, it 'ud be grand to see Rutherford's like old times again.

JOHN. Rutherford's. . . [*He speaks half seriously, half to tease* ANN.] Aunt Ann, have you ever in your life —just for a moment at the back of your mind—wished Rutherford's at the bottom of the Tyne?

ANN *gazes at him in silence. When she speaks again it is as to a foolish child.*

ANN. Are you taking your medicine reg'lar?

JOHN. Yes. But have you ever heard of Moloch? No.—Well, Moloch was a sort of a god—some time ago, you know, before Dick and his kind came along. They built his image with an ugly head ten times the size of a real head, with great wheels instead of legs, and set him up in the middle of a great dirty town. [JANET, *busy at the table, stops to listen, raising her eyes almost for the first time.*] And they thought him a very important person indeed, and made sacrifices to him—human sacrifices—to keep him going, you know. Out of every family they set aside one child to be an offering to him when it was big enough, and at last it became a sort of honour to be dedicated in this way, so much so, that the victims gave themselves gladly to be crushed out of life under the great wheels. That was Moloch.

There is a silence. JANET *speaks eagerly.*

JANET. Where did you get that?

JOHN. Get what?

JANET. What you've been saying.

JOHN. Everybody knows it.

JANET. Dedicated—we're dedicated—all of us—to Rutherford's. And being respected in Grantley.

ANN. Talk, talk—chatter, chatter. Words never mended nothing that I knows on.

JOHN. [*who is tired of the subject.*] Talk—if I hadn't you to talk to, Aunt Ann, or Mary, I think I'd talk to the door-post.

JANET. [*who has slipped back into her dull listlessness.*] And just as much good would come of it, I daresay.

ANN. And who are you to say it? You got no book-learning like him—and no invention neither.

JANET. [*who is laying forks round the table.*] How do you know he's got an invention?

ANN. Because he says so, o' course—how else? It's a secret.

JANET. John always had a secret. He used to sell them to me when we were little. And when I'd given him whatever it was he'd taken a fancy to, there was no secret. Nothing worth paying for, anyway.

JOHN. Oh, shut up.

ANN. [*as if they were children.*] Now, now. Don't quarrel.

JANET. We're not quarrelling.

JOHN. Yes, we are. And you began it.

JANET. I didn't. I only said what any one can see. [*Scornfully.*] You make an invention. Likely.

JOHN. A lot you know about it.

JANET. If you did, you'd muck it somehow, just as you do everything.

ANN. [*querulously.*] Bairns! Bairns! One would think you'd never growed up.

JOHN. [*angrily to* JANET.] I wish you'd keep quiet if you can't say anything decent. You never open your mouth except to say something disagreeable. First there's Mary throwing cold water, then you come in.

JANET. I'm not any more disagreeable than any one else. We're all disagreeable if it comes to that. All except Susan.

ANN. Susan's not one of the family! A common servant lass.

JANET. Like me.

ANN. [*using the family threat.*] Just you let your father hear you.

JANET. We do the same things.

ANN. Susan's paid for it. Whoever gave you a farthing?

JANET. [*bitterly.*] Aye!

ANN. Has she made another girdle cake?

JANET. I didn't notice. She's probably talking to her young man at the gate.

JOHN. Susan with a young man!

ANN. Yes, indeed—a nice thing, and her turned forty.

JOHN. Ugliest woman I ever saw bar none. Who is it? Not Martin surely! [JANET *stops suddenly and looks at him.*] I've noticed he's been making excuses to come about lately, and he's taken the cottage at the Tarn.

JANET. [*with a sudden stillness.*] It isn't Martin.

JOHN. Well, if it is, the Guv'nor would soon put a stop to it.

JANET. Put a stop to what?

JOHN. Martin getting married—if it's that he's after.

JANET. What right's he to interfere?

JOHN. Right—nonsense. Martin practically lives at the Works as it is. If he had a wife he'd get to be just like the other men—hankering after going home at the proper time, and all that.

ANN. [*preparing to leave the room.*] You and your gossip—and the dinner spoiling every minute. [*With a parting shot at* JANET.] It's a good thing nobody's married you—a nice hoose you'd make without me to look to everything.

She fusses out.

JOHN. Married! Cheer up, Janet! Thirty-five last birthday, isn't it?

MARY. John!

JANET. [*her voice hard.*] No, it isn't. It's thirty-six.

JOHN. You'll make a happy home for some one yet. No one's asked you so far, I suppose?

JANET. Who's there been to ask me?

JOHN. Oh, I don't know. I suppose you have been kept pretty close. Other girls manage it, don't they?

JANET. I don't know other girls.

JOHN. Mary caught me.

JANET. I don't know anybody—you know that. No one in Grantley's good enough for us, and we're not good enough for the other kind.

JOHN. Speak for yourself.

JANET. Oh, we're all alike; don't you fret. Why hasn't young Squire Earnshaw invited you to shoot with him again? He did once—when none of his grand friends were there.

JOHN *pretends not to hear.*

JANET. I know why.

JOHN. Oh, you know a lot, don't you?

JANET. It was because you pretended—pretended you knew the folk he talked about, because you'd shown them over the Works once when father was away. Pretended you said "parss" for pass every day. I heard you. And I saw the difference. Gentlemen are natural. Being in company doesn't put them about. They don't say "thank you" to servants neither, not like you do to Susan.

JOHN. Oh, shut up, will you?

JANET. I wouldn't pretend, whatever I did—mincing round like a monkey.

ANN. [*coming in from the kitchen.*] Now, now. That's the door, isn't it?

They all listen. A voice is heard outside, then the outer door opens.

JOHN. Father.

JANET. Martin.

There is the sound of a stick being put into the umbrella-stand; then JOHN RUTHERFORD *comes in, followed by* MARTIN. *He is a heavily built man of sixty, with a heavy lined face and tremendous shoulders—a typical north-countryman. There is a distinct change in the manner of the whole family as he comes in and walks straight to his desk as if the door had scarcely interrupted his walk.* MARTIN *is a good-looking man of the best type of working man. Very simple in manner and bearing—about forty years of age. He touches his forelock to the family and stands beside the door with nothing servile in either action.*

RUTHERFORD. [*talking as he comes in.*] . . and it's got to be managed somehow. Lads are wanted and lads 'll have to be found. Only six out of the seventeen shops started the first shift o' Monday.

MARTIN. Grey couldn't start at all last week for want o' lads.

RUTHERFORD. What's got them? Ten years ago you could have had fifty for the asking, and taken your pick. And now here's the work waiting to be done, and half the hands we want to do it lounging about Grantley with their hands in their breeches pockets, the beggars. What do they think they're bred for?

MARTIN. There's too many of 'em making for the towns.

RUTHERFORD. Just remind me to give the men a word o' wages time o' Saturday. They got to keep their lads at home as long as they're wanted at Rutherford's. [*Turning papers and a bunch of keys out of his pocket on to the desk.*] The new lear man's shaping all right then.

MARTIN. Dale? Knows as much aboot a pot-arch as I knows aboot a flying-machine.

RUTHERFORD. Why didn't you tell me before?

MARTIN. I thought I'd wait to give him a trial. I took a look at the flues myself to make sure it wasn't them at fault. He can't get the heat up properly, and the pots are put into the furnaces afore they're furnace heat. They'll all be broke one o' these days.

RUTHERFORD. We'd better take on Ford.

MARTIN. He finishes at Cardiff Saturday.

RUTHERFORD. He'll do, I suppose?

MARTIN. [*feeling in his pocket and pulling out a leather purse or bag.*] You couldn't get a better man for the job in all Tyneside. There's the ten pound young Henderson had out o' the cash-box.

He counts it out on the desk.

RUTHERFORD. What! He's given it up?

MARTIN. Aye. Leastways, I took it off him.

RUTHERFORD. Has he owned to it?

MARTIN. Sure enough. Said he hadn't gone for to do it. Cried like a bairn, he did.

JOHN. [*from his arm-chair by the fire.*] Henderson? Has he been stealing?

MARTIN. Aye, Mr. John. I caught him at it i' the office—at dinner-time when there's nobody much aboot —wi' his hands i' the box.

JOHN. Dirty little sweep! Have you kicked him out?

RUTHERFORD. [*pausing with his hand on his cash-box.*] I suppose there's no doubt he's a bad 'un?

MARTIN. Bred and born.

RUTHERFORD. No use giving him another chance?

MARTIN. Throwed away on the likes o' him.

RUTHERFORD. [*locking the box and putting it in a drawer.*] Ah. . . Well, if he comes back, turn him away. Everything ready for the pot-setting in the morning?

MARTIN. Aye, sir. The night-shift 'll set four when they stop, and the other shift 'll set the others a bit later.

RUTHERFORD. You'll be there to see them do it ?

MARTIN. Surely.

RUTHERFORD. [*with a curious softening in his voice.*] When 'll you get your rest ?

MARTIN. Plenty o' time for that, sir.

RUTHERFORD. [*crossing to the fire.*] We'll have you on strike one o' these days, Martin.

MARTIN. [*turning to go.*] Not me, sir. When you begin to spare yourself you can begin to think about sparing me. . . Is that all for the night, sir ?

RUTHERFORD. [*wearily.*] Aye. Good-night to ye. [*He has taken his pipe from the rack above the mantelpiece and is filling it.*] You've farther to go now ye're in the Tarn Cottage.

There is a slight pause before MARTIN *replies.*

MARTIN. Aye. A bit, mebbee.

RUTHERFORD. [*lighting his pipe.*] I—should ha'—thought you'd had done better to stick to your old one—near at hand ; but you know your own business best.

MARTIN. It's weel enough.

ANN. Now Martin's here, can he no take a look at the range ? Susan canna get the oven to go.

JANET. [*to* ANN.] The oven's all right.

RUTHERFORD. [*with a complete change of voice and manner.*] Now what's that got to do with Martin ?

ANN. [*subsiding.*] He could tell Baines to send up a man i' the mornin'.

RUTHERFORD. That's not Martin's business—you must send word to Baines himself.

MARTIN. I could easy take a look at it while I'm here, sir. It 'ud save you sending.

RUTHERFORD. [*wearily.*] Oh, all right. If you want a job.

ANN. Janet, go and show Martin.

MARTIN *turns at the door and looks for her to pass out before him.*

JANET. [*standing motionless.*] Susan can show him.

MARTIN *goes, closing the door.*

RUTHERFORD. Any letters?

ANN. [*flurried.*] Yes. They're somewheres. Janet—

RUTHERFORD. [*with the sudden irritation of a tired man.*] Bless me, can't I have a simple thing like that done for me? How often have I said to put them in one place and stick to it? [JANET *discovers the letters on the small table by the door and brings them to him. He sits on the settle and stretches out his legs.*] Here, take them off for me. I'm dead beat.

After a moment's silent revolt she kneels and begins to unlace his boots. He looks at her bent sullen face.

Ah! sulky, are ye?

She makes no answer.

'Ud like to tell me to take them off myself, I dare say. And I been working the day long for you. [*Getting irritated at her touch.*] Spoilt—that's what you are, my lass. [*Opening a letter.*] What's this? A polite letter from the vicar, eh? Damn polite—a new organ—that's his trouble—thinks I'd like to help pay for it. [*He throws it across the hearthrug to* JOHN.] There's a job for you—you're idle enough. Write and tell His Reverence to go to the devil and ask him for an organ. Or mebbee Richard 'll like to do it, as he's his curate. [*To* JANET.] Let be, let be.

He takes his boots off painfully one with the other.

ANN. [*plaintively.*] I'm sure the vicar came in pleasant enough not a week gone, and asked for 'ee—

RUTHERFORD. Asked for my money, you mean. They're civil enough when they want anything, the lot of them. [*To* JANET—*sarcastically, as she carries the boots away.*] Thank 'ee kindly.

He gets up and puts his slippers on. ANN *speaks in a flurried whisper to* JOHN.

ANN. John, you've got your father's chair.

JOHN. [*gets up.*] Sorry.

RUTHERFORD. [*drags the chair up to the table, and sits down as if he were tired out. He looks at* JOHN *with a curiously interested expression as he lounges across.*] Feeling better?

JOHN. [*uneasy and consequently rather swaggering.*] Oh, I'm still a bit shaky about the knees.

RUTHERFORD. You'll be coming back to work, I suppose. There's plenty to be done. How's the little lad?

JOHN. I don't know—all right, I suppose. Isn't he, Mary?

MARY. Mr. Rutherford asked you.

JOHN. But I don't know.

RUTHERFORD *looks at* MARY, *she at him; there is a pause.*

RUTHERFORD. [*busy with his letters.*] I thought Gibson had forbidden you to smoke?

JOHN *rebels for a moment, then throws his cigarette into the fire with an action like a petted child.*

JOHN. I must do something.

RUTHERFORD. What have you been busy with to-day? . . This—metal o' yours? Eh?

JOHN. [*evasively.*] Aunt Ann's been talking about it.

ANN. [*meaning well.*] We've joost been saying how it'll all come right now—all the bother. John 'll do it—Rutherford's 'll be itself again.

RUTHERFORD. Martin tells me you've hit on a good thing—a big thing. . . I've got to hear more about it, eh?

JOHN. If you like.

RUTHERFORD. What's that?

He looks up slowly under his eyebrows—a long curious look, as if he saw the first possibility of opposition.

JOHN. [*going over to the fire-place.*] Can't we have dinner?

ANN. You're getting back your appetite. That's a good sign.

RUTHERFORD. Dinner can wait. [*He sweeps a space clear on the table and puts his letters down.* JANET *presently sits down resigned to a family row.* MARY *listens throughout intently, her eyes constantly fixed on* JOHN.] I'm a business man, and I like to know how I stand. [*Launching at* JOHN.] Now—what d'ye mean?

JOHN. I don't understand you, sir.

RUTHERFORD. What's there to understand?

JOHN. [*his manner gradually slipping into that of a child afraid of its father.*] Well, I've been away from the Works for two months. Before we begin to talk about the other thing, I'd like to know what's doing.

RUTHERFORD. What's that got to do with it? You never have known what's doing.

JOHN. I think I ought to be told—now.

RUTHERFORD. That's it, is it? You want a bone flung to your dignity! Well, here it is. Things are bad.

JOHN. Really bad?

RUTHERFORD. For the present. These colliery strikes one on top of another, for one thing. Rayner's drew the ponies out of the pit this afternoon.

JOHN. It'll about smash them, won't it?

RUTHERFORD. Mebbee. The question is how it affects us.

JOHN. Oh! We get coal from them?

RUTHERFORD. I should have thought you'd ha' picked up that much—in five years.

JOHN. Stoking isn't my business.

RUTHERFORD. You might have noticed the name on the trucks—you see it every day of your life. Well, yes—we get our coal from them. . . What then?

JOHN. Well—what's going to happen? How bad is it?

RUTHERFORD. I said—bad for the present. The balance-sheet for the year's just been drawn up and shows a loss of four thousand on last year's working. It's not a big loss, considering what's been against us—those Americans dumping all that stuff in the spring. Then the price of materials has gone up, there's a difference there. [*Irritably, answering his own thoughts.*] It's not ruin, bless us—it's simply a question of work and sticking together; but the Bank's rather more difficult to manage than usual. There's not one of 'em would sacrifice a shilling of their own to keep the old place going—they want their fees reg'lar. That's the pulse they keep their finger on—when it misses a beat, they come crowding round with their hands up like a lot of damned old women. . . Well, well! Something's wanted to pull things together. . . Now—this idea of yours. Martin tells me it's worth something.

JOHN. [*nettled.*] Worth something? It's worth thousands a year to any one who works it properly.

RUTHERFORD. [*with his half smile.*] Thousands! That's a fair margin. [*Drily.*] What's your calculation in figures?

JOHN. That depends on the scale it's worked on.

RUTHERFORD. [*as to a child.*] Yes—so I supposed. What's your preliminary cost?

JOHN. [*getting nervous.*] Nothing—as far as I know. I can't say for certain—something like that.

RUTHERFORD. Something like nothing; and on something like nothing you're going to show a profit of thousands a year on a single metal. [*Drily.*] Sounds like a beautiful dream, doesn't it? About your cost of working now—that should run you into something?

JOHN. [*who is getting annoyed.*] Thirty per cent less than what you're working at now.

RUTHERFORD. Indeed. . . May I ask where and how you've carried out your experiments?

JOHN. [*uneasily.*] I didn't mention it to you. A year ago I got a muffle furnace. I've worked with it from time to time, in the old pot-loft.

RUTHERFORD. Paid for it by any chance?

JOHN. Not yet.

RUTHERFORD. How did you manage for coals now?

JOHN. I—took what I wanted from the heap.

RUTHERFORD. Ah, and your materials—I suppose you took what you wanted of those too? Well, I've no objection, if you can make it good. [*Suddenly.*] What's your receipt?

JOHN. I haven't—I'm not prepared to say.

There is a silence. ANN *lowers her knitting with an alarmed look.*

RUTHERFORD. [*heavily.*] A week or two ago in this room you told me it was perfected—ready for working to-morrow.

JOHN. Yes—I told you so.

RUTHERFORD. [*suppressed.*] What d'ye mean? . . Come, come, sir—I'm your father, I want an answer to my question—a plain answer, if you can give one.

JOHN. [*in a high-pitched, nervous voice.*] I—I'm a business man, and I want to know where I stand.

RUTHERFORD *breaks into a laugh.*

Oh, you turn me into an impudent school-boy, but I'm not. I'm a man, with a thing in my mind worth a fortune.

ANN. John! [*Asserting her authority.*] You must tell your father.

JOHN. [*very excited.*] I shan't tell him till I've taken out my patent, so there!

There is a pause—RUTHERFORD *stares at his son.*

RUTHERFORD. [*heavily.*] What d'ye mean?

JOHN. I mean what I say. I want my price.

RUTHERFORD. Your price—your price? [*Bringing*

his fist down on the table.] Damn your impudence, sir. A whippersnapper like you to talk about your price.

JOHN. [*losing his temper.*] I'm not a whippersnapper. I've got something to sell and you want to buy it.

RUTHERFORD. To buy? To sell? And this to your father?

JOHN. To any man who wants what I've made.

There is a dead silence on this, broken only by an involuntary nervous movement from the rest of the family. Then RUTHERFORD *speaks without moving.*

RUTHERFORD. Ah! So that's your line, is it? . . This is what I get for all I've done for you. . . This is the result of the schooling I give you.

JOHN. [*with an attempt at a swagger.*] I suppose you mean Harrow.

RUTHERFORD. It was two hundred pound—that's what I mean.

JOHN. And you gave me a year of it!

RUTHERFORD. And a lot of good you've got of it. . . What ha' you done with it? Idled your time away when you should ha' been working. Married a wife who bears you a bairn you can't keep. [*At a movement from* MARY.] Aye—hard words mebbee. What will you do for your son when the time comes? I've toiled and sweated to give you a name you'd be proud to own—toiled like a dog when other men were taking their ease—plotted and planned to get my chance, taken it and held it when it come till I could ha' burst with the struggle. Sell! You talk o' selling to me, when everything you'll ever make couldn't pay back the life I've given to you!

JOHN. Oh, I know, I know.

ANN. You mustn't answer your father, John.

JOHN. Well, after all, I didn't ask to be born.

RUTHERFORD. Nor did the little lad, God help him.

JOHN. [*rapidly.*] Look here, father—why did you send me to Harrow?

RUTHERFORD. Why? To make a gentleman of you, and because I thought they'd teach you better than the Grammar School. I was mistaken.

JOHN. They don't turn out good clerks and office boys.

RUTHERFORD. What's that?

JOHN. I've been both for five years. Only I've had no salary.

RUTHERFORD. You've been put to learn your business like any other young fellow. I began at the bottom—you've got to do the same. There'll not be two masters at Rutherford's while I'm on my legs.

JOHN. That's it, that's it. You make a servant of me.

RUTHERFORD. What do you suppose your work's worth to Rutherford's? Tell me that.

JOHN. What's that matter now? I've done with it. I've found a way out.

RUTHERFORD. A way out—of what?

JOHN. [*rather taken aback.*] Well—you don't suppose I'd choose to live here all my life?

ANN. [*taking it personally.*] And why not, pray?

RUTHERFORD. Your father has lived here, and your grandfather before you. It's your inheritance—can't you realise that?—what you've got to come to when I'm under ground. We've made it for you, stone by stone, penny by penny, fighting through thick and thin for close on a hundred years.

JOHN. Well, after all, I can't help what you and grandfather chose to do.

RUTHERFORD. Chose to do! There's no chose to do. The thing's there. You're my son—my son that's got to come after me.

JOHN. Oh, it's useless. Our ideas of life are utterly different.

RUTHERFORD. Ideas of life! What do you know about life?

JOHN. Oh, nothing, of course.

RUTHERFORD. If you did, you'd soon stop having ideas about it. Life! I've had nigh on sixty years of it, and I'll tell you. Life's work—keeping your head up and your heels down. Sleep, and begetting children, rearing them up to work when you're gone—that's life. And when you know better than the God who made you, you can begin to ask what you're going to get by it. And you'll get more work and six foot of earth at the end of it.

JOHN. And that's what you mean me to do, is it?

RUTHERFORD. It's what you've got to do—or starve. You're my son—you've got to come after me.

JOHN. Look here, father. You tell me all this. Just try and see things my way for once. Take the Works. I know you've done it all, built it up, and all that—and you're quite right to be proud of it. But I—I don't like the place, that's the long and the short of it. It's not worth my while. After all, I've got myself to think of—my own life. If I'd done that sooner, by Jove! I'd have been a jolly sight better off. I'd not have married, for one thing. [*With a glance at* MARY.] Not that I regret that. You talk about what you did when you were young. You've told me the sort of time you've had—nothing but grind, grind, since the time you could do anything. And what have you got by it? What have you got? I have myself to think of. I want a run for my money—your money, I suppose it is—other fellows do. And I've made this thing myself, off my own bat—and—and—[*ending lamely*]—I don't see why I shouldn't have a look in. . . On my own account. . .

There is an uncomfortable silence.

RUTHERFORD. [*in a new tone.*] You're going to take out a patent, you say?

JOHN. [*taking this as friendly.*] Yes.

RUTHERFORD. Know anything about Patent Law?

JOHN. Well, no—not yet.

RUTHERFORD. It's very simple, and wonderfully cheap —three pound for three years. At the end of three years, you can always extend the time if you want to—no difficulty about that.

JOHN. Oh, no.

RUTHERFORD. But you can't patent a metal.

JOHN. I don't see why not.

RUTHERFORD. What's the use if you do?

JOHN. It's the same as anything else. I take out a patent for a certain receipt, and I can come down on any one who uses it.

RUTHERFORD. And prove that they've used it?

JOHN. They have to find out what it is first. It's not likely I'm going to give the show away. [*Pause.*]

RUTHERFORD. But you want to sell, you say.

JOHN. Yes.

RUTHERFORD. How are you going to do that without giving it away? . . Suppose you go to one of the big chaps—Miles of Cardiff, for example. "Here you are," you say. "I've got an idea worth a fortune. Give me a fortune and I'll tell you what it is." He's not going to buy a pig in a poke any more than I am.

JOHN. Of course, I shall make inquiries about all that. I can't say till I know.

RUTHERFORD. Do you remember a little thing of mine—an invention you would call it? Did ye ever happen to see it?

JOHN. Yes. Martin showed it to me once.

RUTHERFORD. What's your opinion of that now—as a business man?

JOHN. Of course, it had the makings of a good thing —any one could see that.

RUTHERFORD. Nobody did. I was nineteen at the time—a lad. Like you, I hadn't the money to run it myself. Clinton, the American people, got hold of it,

and sold seven hundred thousand the first six months in New York alone. [*He gets up and addresses the room generally.*] Dinner in ten minutes.

JOHN. Surely you could have got some one to take it up—an obvious thing like that?

RUTHERFORD. [*drily.*] That's how it worked out in my case. [*He moves slowly to the door.*]

JOHN. You don't believe I can do what I say.

RUTHERFORD. I can't tell—nor can you.

JOHN. [*high-handed.*] Oh, very well then. What are we talking about?

RUTHERFORD. You undertake to produce ordinary white metal at a third of the usual cost—that's it, isn't it? You've worked this out in a muffle furnace. My experience of muffle furnaces is that they're excellent for experimenting in a very small way. A child can hit on an idea for a metal—provided he's materials at his command, and knows a bit about chemistry. But no man living can estimate the cost of that idea until it's worked out on a big scale. Your receipt, as it stands, isn't worth the paper it's written on.

As RUTHERFORD *moves again towards the door* JOHN *makes a movement to stop him.*

JOHN. Father, look here. Here's an offer.

RUTHERFORD. Thank you kindly.

JOHN. If you'll let me have a pot in one of the big furnaces for a trial—I swear to you, on my honour, I'll let you see the result without touching it, after I've put in the materials. You can clay the pots up—seal them, if you like. Let me do it to-morrow; I can't stand hanging on like this.

RUTHERFORD. To-morrow! Impossible.

JOHN. Why not?

RUTHERFORD. You can't come down to the Works in this weather. You'd catch cold, and be laid up again.

JOHN. The day after then—next week—or, why not? —let Martin do it.

RUTHERFORD. Martin? [*He turns to look at* JOHN, *struck by a new thought.*]

JOHN. Why not? He can do it as well as I can.

RUTHERFORD. Martin? . . He knows then?

JOHN. [*surprised.*] Why, he talked to you about it, didn't he?

RUTHERFORD. Yes, yes. But—he's got the receipt?

JOHN. Yes—there's no difficulty at all. Let him mix the metal and clay her up, and you can open her yourself. Then you'll see. You'll take Martin's word for it, I suppose? Only, for heaven's sake, give me a fair chance.

RUTHERFORD. [*moving suddenly.*] Fair chance be damned, sir. You've said your say, and I've said mine. Think it over!

He goes out, leaving JOHN *standing staring after him.*

JOHN. [*under his breath as the door closes.*] Oh, go to the devil!

ANN. For shame to speak so. Just let him hear you. And there, dinner 'll be as dry as a bone, and I've waited so long I don't feel as if I could touch a morsel. [*She hurries out.*]

JANET. [*with a sort of admiration.*] Now you've done it.

JOHN. Done it! I've jolly well let him know what I think—and high time too. [*Brokenly.*] It isn't fair —it isn't fair. Old bully. What am I going to do?

JANET. [*dropping into her usual tone.*] What you've always done, I suppose.

JOHN. What's that?

JANET. Say you're sorry. It's the soonest way back.

JOHN. I'm not going back. Sooner than give in, I'll starve. I'll go to London, Canada, anywhere. He shan't have me, to grind the life out of me by inches—

and he shan't have my metal. If he thinks he's going to pick my brains and give me nothing for it, he'll find himself jolly well mistaken. Once and for all, I'm going to make a stand. And he can jolly well go to the devil.

MARY *speaks for the first time, in a low voice.*

MARY. What are you making a stand for?

JOHN. [*stopping to look at her.*] Good Lord, Mary, haven't you been listening?

MARY. Yes, I've been listening. You said you wanted your price. What is your price?

JANET. All the profits and none of the work—that's John's style. [*She sits on settle, her chin on her hands.*]

JOHN. A lot you know about it.

MARY *speaks again.*

MARY. If you get your price, what will you do with it?

JANET. He won't get it.

JOHN. [*to* JANET.] Do you suppose I'm going to sit down under his bullying?

JANET. You've done it all your life.

JOHN. Well, here's an end of it then.

JANET. No one ever stands out against father for long—you know that—or else they get so knocked about they don't matter any more. [*She looks at* MARY, *who has made an involuntary movement.*] Oh, I don't mean he hits them—that's not his way.

JOHN. Oh, don't exaggerate.

JANET. Exaggerate—look at mother! You were too young—I remember— [*To* MARY.] You've been here nigh on three months. If you think you're going to change this house with your soft ways, you're mistaken. Nothing 'll change us now—nothing. We're made that way—set—and we've got to live that way. [*Slowly.*] You think you can make John do something. If ever he does it'll be for fear of father, not for love of you.

JOHN. What do you mean? [*In a high voice.*] If you think I'm going to give in—

JANET. I know you're going to give in.

JOHN. Well, I'm not—so there.

JANET. What will you do then?

JOHN. That's my business. Curse Rutherford's! Curse it!

JANET. [*to* MARY.] That's what he'll do. That's what he's been doing these five years. And what's come of it? He's dragged you into the life here—and Tony—that's all. . . I knew all the time you'd have to come in the end, to go under, like the rest of us.

MARY. [*quickly.*] No, no—

JANET. Who's going to get you out of it? John? . . You're all getting excited about this metal. I don't know whether it's good or bad, but anyway it doesn't count. In a few days John 'll make another row for us to sit round and listen to. In a few days more he'll threaten father to run away. He can't, because he's nothing separate from father. When he gives up his receipt, or whatever it is, it'll go to help Rutherford's—not you or me or any one, just Rutherford's. And after a bit he'll forget about it—let it slide like the rest of us. We've all wanted things, one way and another, and we've let them slide. It's no good standing up against father.

JOHN. Oh, who listens to you? Come along, Mary. [*Moving to the door.*] Disagreeable old maid!

He goes out.

MARY *stands in the same place looking at* JANET.

MARY. Oh, Janet, no one's any right to be what he is—no one's any right.

JOHN. [*calling from the hall.*] Mollie! I want you. [*Irritably.*] Mollie!

MARY. Coming! [*She follows him.*]

JANET *remains in the same attitude—her chin on her*

hands, staring sullenly before her. Suddenly she bows her face in her arms and begins to cry.

MARTIN *comes in from the kitchen on his way out. As he reaches the door leading to the hall, he sees her and stops.*

MARTIN. [*in a whisper.*] My lass!

She starts and gets up quickly.

JANET. Martin!

He blunders over to her and takes her in his arms with a rough movement, holding her to him—kisses her with passion and without tenderness, and releases her suddenly. She goes to the fire-place, and leans her arms on the mantelpiece, her head on them—he turns away with his head bent. They stand so.

MARTIN. [*as if the words were dragged from him.*] Saturd'y night—he's away to Wickham—at the Tarn. . . Will ye come?

JANET. Yes.

MARTIN *goes to the door at back. As he reaches it* JOHN RUTHERFORD *comes into the room with some papers in his hand. In crossing between the two, he stops suddenly as if some thought had struck him.*

MARTIN. Good night, sir.

RUTHERFORD. Good night. [*He stands looking at* JANET *till the outer door shuts.*] Why don't you say good night to Martin? It 'ud be more civil—wouldn't it?

JANET. I have said it.

Their eyes meet for a moment—she moves quickly to the door.

I'll tell Susan you're ready.

RUTHERFORD *is left alone. He stands in the middle of the room with his papers in his hand—motionless, save that he turns his head slowly to look at the door by which* MARTIN *has gone out.*

ACT II

It is about nine o'clock in the evening. The lamp is burning on the large table. Bedroom candlesticks are on the small table between the window and door.

JOHN RUTHERFORD *is sitting at his desk. He has been writing, and now sits staring in front of him with a heavy brooding face. He does not hear* DICK *as he comes in quietly and goes to the table to light his candle—then changes his mind, looks at his father, and comes to the fire to warm his hands. He looks, as usual, pale and tired.* RUTHERFORD *becomes suddenly aware of his presence, upon which* DICK *speaks in a gentle, nervous tone.*

DICK. I should rather like to speak to you, if you could spare me a minute.

RUTHERFORD. What's the matter with you?

DICK. The matter?

RUTHERFORD. You're all wanting to speak to me nowadays—what's wrong with things? . . [*Taking up his pen.*] What's the bee in your bonnet?

DICK. [*announcing his news.*] I have been offered the senior curacy at St. Jude's, Southport.

RUTHERFORD. Well—have you taken it?

DICK. [*disappointed.*] I could not do so without your consent. That's what I want to speak to you about —if you could spare me a minute.

RUTHERFORD. [*realising.*] Ah! that means you're giving up your job here?

DICK. Exactly.

RUTHERFORD. Ah. . . Just as well, I dare say.

DICK. You will naturally want to know my reasons for such a step. [*He waits for a reply and gets none.*] In the first place, I have to consider my future. And lately—I have had it in my mind for some time past—somehow my work among the people here hasn't met with the response I once hoped for. . . I have done my best—and it would be ungrateful to say that I had failed utterly when there are always the few who are pleased when I drop in. . . But the men are not encouraging.

RUTHERFORD. I dare say not.

DICK. I have done my best—and yet—failure is not the less bitter on that account.

RUTHERFORD. [*almost kindly.*] Well—perhaps a year or two at a Theological College wasn't the best of trainings for a raw hell like Grantley. It always beats me—whenever a man thinks it's his particular line to deal with humanity in the rough, he always goes to school like a bit of a lad to find out how to do it.

DICK. Ah! you don't understand.

RUTHERFORD. You mean I don't see things your way—well, that's not worth discussing. [*He goes back to his writing.*]

DICK. I have sometimes wondered if your not seeing things my way has had anything to do with my lack of success among your people. For they are your people.

RUTHERFORD. What d'ye mean?

DICK. [*sincerely.*] Not only the lack of religious example on your part—even some kind of Sunday observance would have helped—but all through my work I have been conscious of your silent antagonism. I have always felt that dead weight against me, dragging me down, taking the heart out of all I do and say, even when

I am most certain that I am right to do and say it. [*He ends rather breathlessly.*]

RUTHERFORD. [*testily.*] What the devil have you got hold of now?

DICK. Perhaps I haven't made it clear what I mean.

RUTHERFORD. [*deliberately.*] I've never said a word against you or for you. And I've never heard a word against you or for you. Now! . . As for what you call your work, I don't know any more about it than a bairn, and I haven't time to learn. I should say that if you could keep the men out of the public-houses and hammer a little decency into the women it might be a good thing. But I'm not an expert in your line.

DICK. [*bold in his conviction.*] Father—excuse me, but sometimes I think your point of view is perfectly deplorable.

RUTHERFORD. Indeed! Frankly, I don't realise the importance of my point of view or of yours either. I got my work to do in the world—for the sake o' the argument, so have you—we do it or we don't do it. But what we think about it either way, doesn't matter.

DICK. [*very earnestly.*] It matters to God.

RUTHERFORD. Does it?—Now run along—I'm busy.

DICK. This is all part of your resentment—your natural resentment—at my having taken up a different line to the one you intended for me.

RUTHERFORD. Resentment—not a bit. Wear your collar-stud at the back if you like, it's all one to me. You were no good for my purpose, and there's an end. Where's John?

DICK. I don't know. His candle is here. . . I am still absolutely convinced that I chose the better part.

RUTHERFORD. Probably. There are more ways than one of shirking life, and religion's one of them. If you want my blessing, here it is. As long as you respect

my name and remember that I made a gentleman of ye, ye can go to the devil in your own way.

DICK. Then I have your consent to accept St. Jude's ?

RUTHERFORD. [*writing.*] Aye. Just ring the bell before you go. I want my lamp.

DICK *does so, depressed and disappointed. On his way to his candle he hesitates.*

DICK. By the way—I'm forgetting—Mrs. Henderson wants to see you.

RUTHERFORD. And who's Mrs. Henderson ?

DICK. William's mother.

RUTHERFORD. William ? . . The chap who's been pilfering my money ? Oh, that matter's settled.

DICK. Oh ! . . Yes.

RUTHERFORD. Good night. Did you ring ?

DICK. Yes. I rang. Good night. [*There is a silence, broken by the scratching of* RUTHERFORD'S *pen.* DICK *summons up his courage and speaks again.*] I'm afraid I told Mrs. Henderson she might call to-night.

RUTHERFORD. Did ye now ?

DICK. Yes.

RUTHERFORD. And what the devil did ye do that for, if one may inquire ?

DICK. She is one of my parishioners—in my district. She came to me—asked my help.

RUTHERFORD. Told you the usual yarn, I suppose. More fool you to be taken in by it. I can't see her.

DICK. We don't know that it isn't true. The boy has been led astray by bad companions to bet and gamble. It's a regular gang—George Hammond's one, Fade's another.

RUTHERFORD. I know them. Two of the worst characters and the best workers we've got.

DICK. However that may be, the mother's in great grief, and I promised to intercede with you to give her son another chance.

RUTHERFORD. Then you'd no business to promise anything of the kind. The lad's a young blackguard. Bless my soul—look at the head he's got on him! As bad an egg as you'll find in all your parish, and that's saying a good deal.

DICK. I'm afraid it is—God help them. But—

A series of slow heavy knocks on the outer door are heard, ending with a belated single one.

I'm afraid that is Mrs. Henderson.

RUTHERFORD. [*going on with his writing.*] Aye, it sounds like her hand. Been drowning her trouble, mebbee.

DICK. [*after another knock.*] Well. She's here.

RUTHERFORD. You'd better go and tell her to go away again.

DICK. Yes. [*He makes an undecided move towards the door; stops.*] The woman ought to have a fair hearing.

RUTHERFORD. [*losing patience.*] Fair hearing! She's badgered Martin till he's had to turn her out, and on the top of it all you come blundering in with your talk of a fair hearing. [*He gets up and swings to the door, pushing* DICK *aside.*] Here—let be.

DICK. [*speaking with such earnestness that* RUTHERFORD *stops to look at him.*] Father—one moment. . . Don't you think—don't you think it might be better to be friendly with her? To avoid unpleasantness? And gossip afterwards—

RUTHERFORD. What? God help you for a fool, Richard. One would think I'd nothing to do but fash myself about this young blackguard and speak soft to his mother. [*He goes out into the hall and is heard opening the door.*] Now, Mrs. Henderson—you've come about your lad. You've had my answer.

MRS. HENDERSON *is heard speaking apparently on the mat.*

MRS. HENDERSON. Oh, if you please, sir—if you could just see your way to sparin' me a minute I'd take it kindly, that I would. And I come all the way from home on me two feet—and me a poor widder woman.

She drifts imperceptibly just inside the room. She is a large and powerful woman with a draggled skirt and a shawl over her head, and she is slightly drunk. RUTHERFORD *follows her in and stands by the open door, holding the handle.*

RUTHERFORD. Well, then, out with it. What ha' ye got to say?

MRS. HENDERSON. It's my lad Bill as has been accused o' takin' your money—

RUTHERFORD. Ten pounds.

MRS. HENDERSON. By Mr. Martin, sir.

RUTHERFORD. What then?

MRS. HENDERSON. And not another living soul near to say the truth of it.

RUTHERFORD. Martin's my man, Mrs. Henderson. What he does, he does under my orders. Besides, Martin and your son both say he took it. They've agreed about it.

MRS. HENDERSON. Aye, when he was scared out of his life he owned to it. I'm not denying he owned to it—

RUTHERFORD. Oh, that's it, is it? He wants to go back on it? Why did he give up the money?

MRS. HENDERSON. He was that scared, sir, o' being sent to the gaol and losing his place and all, what wi' Mr. Martin speaking that harsh to him and all, and him a bit of a lad—

RUTHERFORD. I see. In that case I owe him ten pounds?

MRS. HENDERSON. Eh?

RUTHERFORD. I've took ten pounds off him, poor lad, all his honest savings mebbee. Good night, Mrs. Henderson.

MRS. HENDERSON. Ah, Mr. Rutherford, sir, don't 'ee be hard on us—don't 'ee now. We all got summat to be overlooked—every one on us when ye get down to it—and there's not a family harder working nor more respected in Grantley. Mr. Richard here 'll speak for us.

RUTHERFORD. Speak for them, Richard.

DICK. I . . I do believe they are sincerely trying to do better.

RUTHERFORD. Just so—better not rake up bygones. My time's short, Mrs. Henderson, and you've no business to come up to the house at this time o' night, as you know well enough.

MRS. HENDERSON. Aye, sir, begging your pardon. I'm sure I'd be the last to intrude on you and the family if it warn't for—

RUTHERFORD. I dare say. What did Martin say to you when you intruded into the glass-house?

MRS. HENDERSON. What did he say to me?

RUTHERFORD. [*impatiently.*] Aye.

MRS. HENDERSON. [*fervently.*] Far be it from me to repeat what he did say. God forbid that I should dirty my mouth wi' the words that man turned on me! before the men too, and half of 'em wi' their shirts off and me a decent woman. [*Violently.*] "Hawd yer whist," I says to 'n. "Hawd yer whist for a shameless—"

RUTHERFORD. That'll do, that'll do—that's enough. You can take what Martin said from me. The matter's ended.

DICK *makes an appealing movement.*

Five years ago your son was caught stealing coppers out o' the men's coats—men poorer than himself. Don't forget that. I knew about it well enough. I gave him another chance because he was a young 'un, and because you ought to ha' taught him better.

MRS. HENDERSON. Me? Taught him better! That I should ever hear the like!

RUTHERFORD. I gave him another chance. He made the most of it by robbing me the first time he thought he was safe not to be caught. Every man's got a right to go to the devil in his own way, as I've just been telling Mr. Richard here, and your son Bill's old enough to choose his. But lads that get their fingers in my till are no use to me. And there's an end!

DICK. Father! If you talk to her like this—

RUTHERFORD. It's you that's brought her to hear me—you must take the consequences.

DICK. No one is wholly bad—we have no right to say the lad is past hope, to condemn him utterly.

MRS. HENDERSON. Thank 'ee kindly, Mr. Richard, sir—it's gospel truth every word of it. My son's as good a son as ever a lone woman had, but he's the spittin' image of his father, that easily led. And now to have him go wrong and all through keeping bad company and betting on the racing—just as he might ha' laid a bit on you, sir, in your young days and won his money too, sir, along o' your being sartain sure to win.

RUTHERFORD. Well, I would have done my best to get him his money. You take an interest in running?

MRS. HENDERSON. [*fervently.*] Aye, sir, and always has done ever since I was a bit lass. And many's the Saturday me and my old man's gone down to the ground to see you run.

RUTHERFORD. You don't happen to have heard who's won the quarter-of-a-mile at Broughton, do you?

DICK. Father!

MRS. HENDERSON. I did hear as it was Dawson, sir, as I was passing.

RUTHERFORD. Ah. Shepherd was overtrained. What time did he do—Dawson?

MRS. HENDERSON. I don't know, sir.

RUTHERFORD. I made him a shade worse than six under at his trial. Shepherd should have beaten that.

DICK. Father, please! Do let us talk this matter out seriously.

RUTHERFORD. Seriously? What more?

DICK. You see, it is as I said. I am sure Mrs. Henderson will answer for her son's good conduct if you will consent to take him back—won't you, Mrs. Henderson? Just this once. Your kindness may make all the difference, reform him altogether, who knows? He's had his lesson and I hate to preach, but—there is such a thing as repentance.

RUTHERFORD. [*drily*.] That's all right. You say what you think! And don't misunderstand me. I've no objection to Bill Henderson repenting, but I won't have him doing it in my Works, d'ye see? There's nothing spreads so quick as a nice soft feeling like that, and—who knows—we might have half-a-dozen other young blacklegs at the same game. Now, Mrs. Henderson, go home like a sensible woman and send your lad away from Grantley. Keep him clear o' the pit towns—put him on a farm somewhere, where there aren't so many drinks going. And if I were you [*looking at her*], why not go with him yourself?

MRS. HENDERSON. [*after a pause, suddenly truculent*.] Me? Me leave Grantley? In Grantley I was born and in Grantley I'll live, like yourself. And beggin' your pardon, though you are the master, I'll joost take the liberty o' choosin' my own way.

RUTHERFORD. Quite right—quite right. When you've lived and had your bairns and got drunk in a place you're apt to get attached to it—I'm that way myself. But it's just as well to change your drinks once in a while. It's only a friendly word of advice I'm giving you. Take it or leave it.

MRS. HENDERSON. [*bridling*.] And so I will take it or leave it. Much obliged to 'ee.

RUTHERFORD. And now go home, like a good woman.

MRS. HENDERSON. [*tossing her head with an unsteady curtsey.*] And so I will, and a lot I got for my trouble—thank 'ee for nothing.

RUTHERFORD. Thank me for not prosecuting your son, as I might ha' done.

MRS. HENDERSON. [*working herself up.*] Prosecute! Prosecute my son! And why didn't ye do it? Ye darena'—that's why. You're feared o' folks talkin'—o' things said i' the court. And ye took and hided him and him a bit of a lad, and not a decent woman in Grantley but's crying shame on ye!

RUTHERFORD. [*good-humouredly.*] Now, Richard, this is where you come in. You brought her here.

MRS. HENDERSON. [*very shrill.*] You let him off easy, did you? You give him another chance, did you? My lad could ha' had you up for assault—that's what he'd ha' done if he'd had a mind, and quite right too. It's him that's let you off, mind that. And you may thank your devil's luck you're not up afore the magistrate this next Assizes that ever is, and printed in the paper for all the country-side to mock at.

RUTHERFORD. Go on, Richard. She's your parishioner. Turn her out.

MRS. HENDERSON. Him turn me out? A bit of a preaching bairn no stronger nor a linty—him with his good noos and his sojers-o'-Christ-arise! Who was it up and ran away from old Lizzie Winter like a dawg wi' a kettle tied to his tail?

RUTHERFORD. [*quietly without turning.*] We'll have all your secrets in a minute. Are you going, Mrs. Henderson?

MRS. HENDERSON. I'll go when it pleases me, and not afore!

RUTHERFORD. Are you going—

He gets up and moves towards her in a threatening manner.

MRS. HENDERSON. [*retreating.*] Lay hands on me! Lay hands on a helpless woman! I'll larn ye! Folks shall hear tell on it, that they shall, and a bit more besides. I'll larn ye, sure as I'm a living creature.

RUTHERFORD. [*to* DICK, *contemptuously.*] Hark to that—hark to it.

MRS. HENDERSON. You think yourself so grand wi' your big hoose, and your high ways. And your grandfather a potman like my own. You wi' your son that's the laughing-stock o' the parish, and your daughter that goes wi' a working man ahint your back! And so good night to 'ee.

The outer door bangs violently. There is a pause. DICK *speaks in a voice scarcely audible.*

DICK. What was that? . . She said something—about Janet.

RUTHERFORD. [*impatiently.*] Good God, man—don't stand staring there as if the house had fallen.

DICK. [*shaking.*] I told you to be careful—I warned you—I knew how it would be.

RUTHERFORD. Warned me! You're fool enough to listen to what a drunken drab like that says!

DICK. She's not the only one. . .

RUTHERFORD. [*looking at him.*] What d'ye mean? What's that?

DICK. People are talking. I've—heard things. . . It isn't true—it can't be—it's too dreadful.

RUTHERFORD. Heard things—what ha' ye heard?

DICK. It isn't true.

RUTHERFORD. Out with it.

DICK. Lizzie Winter that time—called out something. I took no notice, of course. . . Three nights ago as I was coming home—past a public-house—the men were talking. I heard something then.

RUTHERFORD. What was it you heard?

DICK. There was his name, and Janet's. Then one

of them—George Hammond, I think it was—said something about having seen him on the road to the Tarn late one evening with a woman with a shawl over her head—Martin.

RUTHERFORD. Martin!

DICK. [*trying to reassure himself.*] It's extremely unlikely that there is any truth in it at all. Why, he's been about ever since we were children. A servant, really. No one's ever thought of the possibility of such a thing. They will gossip. It's easy to put two and two together and make five of them. That's all it is, we'll find. Why, even I can recall things I barely noticed at the time—things that might point to its being true—if it weren't so utterly impossible.

RUTHERFORD. [*hoarsely.*] Three nights gone. In this very room—

DICK. [*running on again.*] They've seen some one like Janet, and started the talk. It would be enough.

RUTHERFORD. [*speaking to himself.*] Under my roof—

DICK. After dark on the road with a shawl—all women would look alike. . . It's a pity he's taken the Tarn Cottage.

RUTHERFORD. [*listening again.*] Eh?

DICK. I mean it's a pity it's happened just now.

RUTHERFORD. A good mile from the Works.

DICK. You can't see it from the village.

RUTHERFORD. A good mile to walk, morn and night.

DICK. No one goes there.

RUTHERFORD. A lone place—a secret place, he says to himself. Martin . .

He stands by the table, his shoulders stooped, his face suddenly old. DICK *makes an involuntary movement towards him.*

DICK. Father! Don't take it like that, for heaven's sake—don't look so broken.

RUTHERFORD. Who's broken? . . [*He makes a sign to* DICK *not to come near.*] Him to go against me. You're only a lad—you don't know. You don't know.

JOHN *comes into the room, evidently on his way to bed.*

JOHN. [*idly.*] Hullo! [*Stops short, looking from one to the other.*] What's the matter?

RUTHERFORD. [*turning on him.*] And what the devil do you want?

JOHN. Want?—nothing . . I thought you were talking about me, that's all.

RUTHERFORD. About you, damn you—go to bed, the pair o' ye.

DICK. Father—

RUTHERFORD. Go to bed. There's men's work to be done here—you're best out o' the way. [*He goes to his desk and speaks down the tube.*] Hulloh there—hulloh!

DICK. Wouldn't it be better to wait to talk things over? Here's John—you may be able to settle something—come to some arrangement.

RUTHERFORD. Who's that? Gray—has Martin gone home? Martin! Tell him to come across at once—I want him. Aye—to the house—where else? Have you got it? Tell him at once.

JOHN. [*suspicious.*] I rather want a word with Martin myself. I think I'll stay.

RUTHERFORD. You'll do as you're bid.

JOHN. What do you want Martin for at this time of night?

RUTHERFORD. That's my business.

JOHN. About my metal—

RUTHERFORD. Your metal! What the devil's your metal got to do with it? [*Breaks off.*]

JOHN. [*excited.*] Martin's got it. You know that. You're sending for him. Martin's honest—he won't tell you.

DICK. Here's Janet.

JANET *has come in in answer to the bell and stands by the door sullen and indifferent, waiting for orders.*

JANET. Susan's gone to bed. [*As the silence continues she looks round.*] The bell rang.

DICK. [*looking at* RUTHERFORD.] Some time ago. The lamp—father wanted his lamp.

She goes out.

JOHN. [*rapidly.*] It's no use going on like this, settling nothing either way. Sooner or later we've got to come to an understanding. . . [DICK *makes a movement to stop him.*] Oh, shut up, Dick!

He breaks off at a look from RUTHERFORD.

RUTHERFORD. I want to have it clear. You heard what I said, three days past?

JOHN. Yes, of course.

RUTHERFORD. You still ask your price?

JOHN. I told you—the thing's mine—I made it.

RUTHERFORD. [*to* JOHN.] You've looked at it—fair and honest.

DICK. Oh, what is the use of talking like this now? Father! you surely must see—under the circumstances—it isn't right—it isn't decent.

JOHN. It's perfectly fair and just, what I ask. It benefits us both, the way I want it. You've made your bit. Rutherford's has served its purpose—and it's coming to an end—only you don't see it, Guv'nor. Oh, I know you're fond of the old place and all that—it's only natural—but you can't live for ever—and I'm all right—if I get my price. . .

RUTHERFORD. So much down for yourself—and the devil take Rutherford's.

JOHN. You put it that way—

RUTHERFORD. Yes or no?

JOHN. Well—yes.

A knock is heard at the outer door.

DICK. That's Martin.

JOHN. I'll stay and see him—I may as well.

RUTHERFORD. To-morrow—to-morrow I'll settle wi' ye.

JOHN *looks at him in amazement;* DICK *makes a sign to him to come away; after a moment he does so.*

JOHN. [*turning as he reaches the door.*] Thanks, Guv'nor—I thought you'd come to see things my way.

They go out.

RUTHERFORD. Come in.

MARTIN *comes in, cleaning his boots carefully on the mat—shuts the door after him and stands cap in hand.* RUTHERFORD *sits sunk in his chair, his hands gripping the arms.*

MARTIN. I came up as soon as I could get away.

Pause.

RUTHERFORD. [*as if his lips were stiff.*] You've stayed late.

MARTIN. One o' the pots in Number Three Furnace ran down, and I had to stay and see her under way.

RUTHERFORD. Sit down. . . Help yourself.

MARTIN. Thank 'ee, sir. [*He comes to the table and pours out some whisky, then sits with his glass resting on his knee.*] Winter's setting in early.

RUTHERFORD. Aye—

MARTIN. There's a heavy frost. The ground was hardening as I came along. . . They do say as Rayner's 'll be working again afore the week's out.

RUTHERFORD. Given in—the men?

MARTIN. Aye—the bad weather 'll have helped it. Given a fine spell the men 'ud ha' hung on a while longer—but the cold makes 'em think o' the winter—turns the women and bairns agin them.

RUTHERFORD. Ah!

MARTIN. I thought you'd like to hear the coal 'ud be coming in all right, so I just went over to have a word wi' White the Agent this forenoon. [*He drinks, then as*

the silence continues, looks intently at RUTHERFORD.] You sent for me?

JANET *comes in carrying a reading-lamp. She halts for a moment on seeing* MARTIN. *He gets up awkwardly.*

MARTIN. [*touching his forelock.*] Evenin'.

JANET. Good evening.

She sets the lamp on the desk. RUTHERFORD *remains in the same position till she goes out, closing the door. There is a moment's silence, then* MARTIN *straightens himself, and they look at each other.*

MARTIN. [*hoarsely.*] You're wanting summat wi' me?

RUTHERFORD. I want the receipt of Mr. John's metal.

MARTIN. [*between amazement and relief.*] Eh?

RUTHERFORD. You've got it.

MARTIN. Aye—

RUTHERFORD. Then give it me.

MARTIN. I cannot do that, sir.

RUTHERFORD. What d'ye mean?

MARTIN. It's Mr. John's own—what belongs to him—I canna do it.

RUTHERFORD. On your high horse, eh, Martin? You can't do a dirty trick—you can't, eh?

MARTIN. Ye'll never be asking it of me—you never will—

RUTHERFORD. I am asking it of ye. We've worked together five-and-twenty years, master and man. You know me. You know what there is 'll stop me when I once make up my mind. I'm going to have this metal, d'ye understand?

MARTIN. It's Mr. John's own; if it's ever yourn, he must give it to ye himself.

They look at each other; then RUTHERFORD *gets out of his chair. He speaks deliberately, with clumsy gestures and an air of driving straight to a goal.*

RUTHERFORD. Sit down. . . Look how we stand. We've seven years' losing behind us, slow and sure. We've got the Bank that's poking its nose into this and that, putting a stop to everything that might put us on our legs again—because o' the risk. . . Rutherford's is going down—down—I got to pull her up somehow. There's one way out. If I can show the directors in plain working that I can cover the losses on the first year and make a profit on the second, I've got 'em for good and all.

MARTIN. That's so—and Mr. John 'll see it, and ye'll come to terms—

RUTHERFORD. Mr. John's a fool. My son's a fool—I don't say it in anger. He's a fool because his mother made him one, bringing him up secret wi' books and such-like trash—and when he'd grown a man and the time was come for me to take notice of him, he's turned agin me—

MARTIN. He'll come roond—he's but a bit lad yet—

RUTHERFORD. Turned agin me—agin me and all I done for him—all I worked to build up. He thinks it mighty clever to go working behind my back—the minute he gets the chance he's up on the hearthrug dictating his terms to me. He wants his price, he says—his price for mucking around with a bit of a muffle furnace in his play-hours—that's what it comes to.

MARTIN. Aye—but he's happened on a thing worth a bit.

RUTHERFORD. Luck! Luck! What's he done for it? How long has he worked for it?—tell me that—an hour here and a bit there—and he's got it! I've slaved my life long, and what have I got for it? Toil and weariness. That's what I got—bad luck on bad luck battering on me—seven years of it. And the worst bit I've had yet is that when it turns it's put into my son's hands to give me or not, if you please, as if he was a lord.

MARTIN. He'll come roond—lads has their notions—we all want to have things for ourselves when we're young—

RUTHERFORD. Want—want—lad's talk! What business has he to want when there's Rutherford's going to the dogs?

MARTIN. That canna be, it canna—he'll have to see different.

RUTHERFORD. He won't see different.

MARTIN. He'll learn.

RUTHERFORD. When it's too late. Look here, Martin, we can't go on—you know that as well as I do—leastways you've suspected it. Ten years more as things are 'll see us out. Done with! Mr. John's made this metal—a thing, I take your word for it, that's worth a fortune. And we're going to sit by and watch him fooling it away—selling it for a song to Miles or Jarvis, that we could break to-morrow if we had half a chance. And they'll make on it, make on it—while Rutherford's 'll grub on as we've been grubbing for the last seven years. I'm speaking plain now—I'm saying what I wouldn't say to another living man. We can't go on. You've been with me through it all. You've seen the drag and the struggle of it—the days when I've nigh thrown up the sponge for very weariness—the bit o' brightness that made me go on—the times when I've stood up to the Board, sick in the heart of me, with nothing but my will to turn 'em this way or that. And at the end of it—I come up against this—a bit o' foolishness—just foolishness—and all that I done 'll break on that—just that.

MARTIN. Nay—nay—

RUTHERFORD. I'm getting old, they say—old—there's new ways in the trade, they say. And in their hearts they see me out of it—out o' the place I built afore they learnt their letters, many of 'em—

MARTIN. That'll never be.

RUTHERFORD. Why not?—when you've got but to put your hand in your pocket to save the place and you don't do it. You're with them—you're with the money-grubbing little souls that can't see beyond the next shilling they put in their pockets, that's content to wring the old place dry, then leave it to the rats—you're with a half-broke puppy like Mr. John that wants to grab his bit for himself and clear out. Twenty-five years . . and you go snivelling about what Mr. John thinks of ye—what's right for you to do. Everybody for himself—his pocket or his soul, it's all one. And Rutherford's loses her chance through the lot o' ye. Blind fools!

MARTIN. You blame me—you put me i' the wrong. It's like as if I'd have to watch the old place going down year by year, and have it on my mind that I might ha' saved her.

RUTHERFORD. You think I'm getting this metal for myself against Mr. John?

MARTIN. I'm loth to say it.

RUTHERFORD. Answer me—

MARTIN. Mr. John 'll see it that way.

RUTHERFORD. Stealing like, out o' his pocket into mine? When men steal, Martin, they do it to gain something. If I steal this, what'll I gain by it? If I make money, what'll I buy with it? Pleasure mebbee? Children to come after me—glad o' what I done? Tell me anything in the wide world that'd bring me joy, and I'll swear to you never to touch it.

MARTIN. If you think what you're saying it's a weary life you got to face.

RUTHERFORD. If you give it to me, what'll you gain by it? Not a farthing shall you ever have from me—no more than I get myself.

MARTIN. And what'll Mr. John get for it?

RUTHERFORD. Rutherford's—when I'm gone. [*After a silence.*] He'll thank you in ten years. He'll see the

Big Thing one day mebbee, like what I've done. He'll see that it was no more his to keep than 'twas yours to give nor mine to take. . . It's Rutherford's. . . Will you give it me?

MARTIN. [*facing him.*] If I thought that we'd make a farthing out of it, either on us—

RUTHERFORD. Will ye give it me—

MARTIN *stands looking at him, then slowly begins to feel in his pockets.*

RUTHERFORD. Got it—on you?

MARTIN. [*taking out a pocket-book.*] He'll never forgi' me, Mr. John won't—never i' this world. . . It should be somewheres. He'll turn agin me—it'll be as if I stole it.

RUTHERFORD. Got it?

MARTIN. Nay, I mun' ha' left it up hame. Ay, I call to mind now—I locked it away to keep it safe.

RUTHERFORD. Can ye no' remember it? Think, man—think!

MARTIN. Nay, I canna be sure. I canna call the quantities to mind.

RUTHERFORD. [*violently.*] Think—think—you must know!

MARTIN. [*wonderingly.*] I can give it 'ee first thing i' the morning.

RUTHERFORD. I want it to-night. . . No, no—leave it—you might get it wrong—better make sure—bring it up in the morning. Good-night to 'ee—good-night. And remember—I take your word to bring it—no going back, mind ye—

MARTIN. Nay, nay. [*Turning to go.*] I doubt if Mr. John 'll ever see it in the way you do. If you could mebbee explain a bit when he hears tell of it—put in a word for me, belike—

RUTHERFORD. I'm to bed.

MARTIN. I take shame to be doing it now.

RUTHERFORD. Off wi' ye—off wi' ye—wi' your con-

science so delicate and tender. Keep your hands clean, or don't let any one see them dirty—it'll do as well.

MARTIN. He worked it out along o' me. Every time it changed he come running to show me like a bairn wi' a new toy.

RUTHERFORD. It's for Rutherford's. . .

MARTIN. Ay, for Rutherford's— Good night, sir.

He goes out.

After a pause, JANET *comes in to put things straight for the night. She goes into the hall and is heard putting the chain on the outer door—comes back, locking the inner door—then takes the whisky decanter from the tray and locks it in the sideboard, laying the key on the desk.* RUTHERFORD *stands on the hearthrug. As she takes up the tray he speaks.*

RUTHERFORD. How long has this been going on atween you and Martin?

She puts the tray down and stands staring at him with a white face.

JANET. How long?

RUTHERFORD. Answer me.

JANET. September—about when Mary and Tony came.

There is a long silence. When it becomes unbearable she speaks again.

What are you going to do? [*He makes no answer.*] You must tell me what you're going to do.

RUTHERFORD. Keep my hands off ye.

JANET. You've had him here.

RUTHERFORD. That's my business.

JANET. [*speaking in a low voice as if she were repeating a lesson.*] It wasn't his fault. It was me. He didn't come after me. I went after him.

RUTHERFORD. Feel—proud o' yourself?

JANET. You can't punish him for what isn't his fault. If you've got to punish any one, it's me. . .

RUTHERFORD. How far's it gone?

JANET. [*after a pause.*] Right at first, I made up my mind that if you ever found out, I'd go right away, to put things straight. [*She goes on presently in the same toneless voice.*] He wanted to tell you at the first. But I knew it would be no use. And once we'd spoken—every time was just a little more. So we let it slide. . . It was I said not to tell you.

RUTHERFORD. Martin . . that I trusted as I trust myself.

JANET. I'll give him up.

RUTHERFORD. You can't give him back to me. He was a straight man. What's the good of him now? You've dragged the man's heart out of him with your damned woman's ways.

She looks at him.

JANET. You haven't turned him away—you couldn't do that!

RUTHERFORD. That's my business.

JANET. You couldn't do that—not Martin.

RUTHERFORD. Leave it—leave it. . . Martin's my servant, that I pay wages to. I made a name for my children—a name respected in all the countryside—and you go with a working-man. To-morrow you leave my house. D'ye understand? I'll have no light ways under my roof. No one shall say I winked at it. You can bide the night. To-morrow when I come in I'm to find ye gone. . . Your name shan't be spoke in my house . . never again.

JANET. Yes. [*She stands looking down at the table, then slowly moves to go, her feet dragging—stops for a moment and says in a final tone, almost with a sigh of relief.*] Then there'll be no need for anybody to know it was Martin—

RUTHERFORD. No need to know. Lord, you drive me crazy! With all Grantley telling the story—my name in every public-house—

JANET. When I'm gone. [*Looking up.*] What did you say?

RUTHERFORD. It's all over the place by now. Richard's heard it—your own brother. . . You've been running out o' night, I suppose. Somebody's seen.

JANET. What's Dick heard?

RUTHERFORD. What men say about women like you. They got a word.

JANET. The men. . . O God!

RUTHERFORD. Ay—you say that now the thing's done—you'll whine and cry out now you done your worst agin me.

JANET. Let me be.

RUTHERFORD. You're going to put things straight, are ye—you're going to walk out comfortable wi' your head up and your fine talk?

JANET. I'm ready to stand by it.

RUTHERFORD. It's not you that's got to stand by it—it's me! What ha' you got to lose? Yourself, if you've a mind to. That's all. It's me that's to be the laughing-stock—the Master whose daughter goes wi' a working-man like any Jenny i' the place—

JANET. Oh! You stand there, to drive me mad—

RUTHERFORD. That'll do, that'll do—I've heard enough. You've confessed, and there's an end.

JANET. Confessed? As if I'd stolen something. [*Brokenly.*] You put it all on to me, every bit o' the wrong.

RUTHERFORD. Ah, you'll set to and throw the blame on Martin now. I thought we'd come to it.

JANET. No, no, I've taken that. But . . you make no excuse. . . You think of this that I've done separate from all the rest—from all the years I done as you bid me, lived as you bid me.

RUTHERFORD. What's that to do wi' it? I'm your father! I work for 'ee, I give 'ee food and clothes for

your back! I got a right to be obeyed—I got a right to have my children live respectable in the station where I put them. You gone wrong. That's what you done. And you try to bring it up against me because I set you up i' the world. . . Go to bed.

JANET. Oh, you've no pity. . . [*She makes a movement to go, then turns again as if for a moment.*] I was thirty-six. Gone sour. Nobody'd ever come after me, not even when I was young—you took care o' that. Half of my life was gone, wellnigh all of it that mattered. . . What have I had of it, afore I go back to the dark? What have I had of it? Tell me that. Tell me!

RUTHERFORD. Where's the man as 'ud want you wi' your sulky ways?

JANET. I've sat and sewed—gone for a walk—seen to the meals—every day—every day. That's what you've given me to be my life—just that!

RUTHERFORD. Talk, talk, talk! Fine words to cover up the shame and disgrace you brought on me—

JANET. On you?

RUTHERFORD. Where 'd you ha' been if I hadn't set you up?

JANET. Down in the village—in amongst it, with the other women—happy mebbee.

RUTHERFORD. [*angrily.*] I brought you up for a lady as idle as you please—you might ha' sat wi' your hands afore you from morn till night if ye'd had a mind to.

JANET. Me a lady? What do ladies think about, sitting the day long with their hands before them? What have they in their idle hearts?

RUTHERFORD. What more did you want, in God's name?

JANET. Oh, what more! The women down there know what I wanted—with their bairns wrapped in their shawls and their men to come home at night time. I've envied them—envied them their pain, their poorness—

the very times they hadn't bread. Theirs isn't the dead empty house, the blank o' the moors; they've got something to fight, something to be feared of. They've got life, those women we send cans o' soup to out o' pity when their bairns are born. Me a lady! with work for a man in my hands, passion for a man in my heart! I'm common —common.

RUTHERFORD. It's a lie! I've risen up. You can't go back on it—my children can't go back.

JANET. Who's risen—which of us?

RUTHERFORD. You say that because you've shamed yourself, and you're jealous o' them that keep decent like gentlefolk—

JANET. Dick—that every one laughs at? John—with his manners?

RUTHERFORD. Whisht wi' your wicked tongue!

JANET. Who's Mary? A little common work-girl no real gentleman would ha' looked at. . . You think you've made us different by keeping from the people here. We're just the same as they are! Ask the men that work for you—ask their wives that curtsey to us in the road. Do you think they don't know the difference? We're just the same as they are—common, every one of us. It's in our blood, in our hands and faces; and when we marry, we marry common.

RUTHERFORD. Marry! Common or not, nobody's married you that I can see—

JANET. Leave that—don't you say it!

RUTHERFORD. It's the truth, more shame to 'ee.

JANET. [*passionately*.] Martin loves me honest. Don't you come near! Don't you touch that! . . You think I'm sorry you've found out—you think you've done for me when you use shameful words on me and turn me out o' your house. You've let me out o' gaol! Whatever happens to me now, I shan't go on living as I lived here. Whatever Martin's done, he's taken me from you. You've

ruined my life, you with your getting on. I've loved in wretchedness, all the joy I ever had made wicked by the fear o' you. . . [*Wildly.*] Who are you? Who are you? A man—a man that's taken power to himself, power to gather people to him and use them as he wills—a man that 'd take the blood of life itself and put it into the Works—into Rutherford's. And what ha' you got by it—what? You've got Dick, that you've bullied till he's a fool—John, that's waiting for the time when he can sell what you've done—and you've got me—me to take your boots off at night—to wellnigh wish you dead when I had to touch you. . . Now! . . Now you know!

ACT III

It is about eleven o'clock on the following morning. JANET *is sitting at the table with a shawl about her shoulders talking in low tones to* MARY, *who is opposite.*

JANET. [*after a pause.*] You mean that you guessed ?

MARY. Yes.

JANET. You knew all the time, and you didn't tell ? Not even John ?

MARY. Why should I tell him ?

JANET. I would ha' told Martin if it had been you.

MARY. Not John.

JANET. It was good of you. You've always been better to me than I've been to you.

MARY. What are you going to do ?

JANET. He says I'm to go. He's to come in and find me gone. I'm never to set foot in this room again. Never to lock up and give him the keys last thing. Never to sit the long afternoon through in the window, till the chimneys are bright in the dark. I've done what women are shamed for doing—and all the night I've barely slept for the hope in my heart.

MARY. Hope ?

JANET. Of things coming. I had a dream—a dream that I was in a place wi' flowers, white and thick like they never grow on the moor—but it was the moor—a place near Martin's cottage. And I dreamt that he came to me with the look he had when I was a lass, with his head

up and the lie gone out of his eyes. All the time I knew I was on my bed in my room here—but it was like as if sweetness poured into me, spreading and covering me like the water in the tarn when the rains are heavy in the fells.

MARY. Is Mr. Rutherford very angry?

JANET. He won't never hear my name again. Oh, last night I said things to him, when he blamed me so—things he can't never forget. I was wild—mad with the bitterness of it. He made it all ugly with the things he said. I told him what I never looked to tell him, though I'd had it in my heart all these years. All the time I was speaking I was dead with shame that he should know, and I had to go on. But afterwards—it was as if I'd slipped a burden, and I was glad he knew, glad that Dick heard it in the street—glad! For, when I'd got over the terror of it, it came to me that this was what we'd been making for ever since you came, that we were to win through to happiness after all, Martin and I. Because I've doubted. Men's lives are different to ours. And sometimes, when we've stolen together, and afterwards I've seen his face and the sadness of it, I've wondered what I had to give him that could count against what he'd lost.

MARY. But that's done with now.

JANET. Yes! That's why I dreamt of him so last night. It was as if all that was best in me was in that dream—he couldn't help but love me. It was a message—I couldn't have thought of it by myself. It's something that's come to me, here. [*Putting her hands on her breast.*] Part of me.

MARY *looks at her with a new understanding. After a pause she speaks again, very gently.*

MARY. Where are you going when Martin comes for you?

JANET. I don't know yet. He'll say what to do.

MARY. Have you got your things ready?

JANET. [*as if she scarcely heard.*] Yes.

MARY. I could see to them for you.

JANET. They're all ready. I put them together early in the box mother had. [*She breaks off, listening.*]

MARY. Janet, if ever the time should be when you want help—and it does happen sometimes even to people who are very happy—remember that I'll come when you ask me—always.

JANET. He's coming now! [*She sits listening, her eyes bright.* MARY *goes out quietly, closing the door.*]

MARTIN *comes in from the hall.*

JANET. [*very tenderly.*] Martin! [*He stands in the doorway, his cap in his hands, his head bent. He looks spent, broken, and at the sight of him the hope dies slowly out of her face.*]

MARTIN. Is Mr. John about?

JANET. I don't know.

MARTIN. I mun see 'n. I got summat to say to 'n.

JANET. He's down at the Works mebbee.

MARTIN. I canna seek him there.

JANET. You could give a message.

MARTIN. Nay. It's summat that's got to be said to his face—like a man.

JANET. Have you nothing to say to me, Martin—to my face like a man?

MARTIN. What should there be to say betwixt you and me? It's all said long since.

JANET. He's turned you away? [*He raises his eyes and looks at her for the first time.*]

MARTIN. Ay. You've said it. What I've been trying to tell myself these three hours past. Turned away I am, sure enough. Twenty-five year. And in a minute it's broke. Wi' two words.

JANET. He'll call you back. He can't do without

you, Martin. He's done it in anger like he was last night. He'll call you back.

MARTIN. He never calls no one back. He's a just man, and he's in the right of it. Anger—there's no anger in a face that's twisting like a bairn's—white as if it was drained o' the blood. There's no anger in a man that stands still where he is, when he might ha' struck and killed and still been i' the right.

JANET *gets up slowly and goes to the fire.*

JANET. Come and get warm by the fire. It's a bitter cold morning. Come and get warm.

He moves slowly across and sits on the settle. She kneels beside him, takes his hands and begins to rub them.

JANET. [*as if he were a child.*] Your hands are as cold, as cold—like frozen. It's all fresh and new to you now, my dear, the surprise of it. It'll pass—and by and by you'll forget it—be glad, mebbee. Did you get your breakfast?

MARTIN. Ay.

JANET. What have you been doing—since?

MARTIN. Walking—walking. Up on the fell I been —trying to get it clear—

JANET. On the fell, in such weather! That's why you're so white and weary. You should have come to me, my honey—you should ha' come straight to me. I would ha' helped you, my dear—out of my love for 'ee.

MARTIN. There's no help.

JANET. You say that now because your heart's cold with the trouble. But it'll warm again—it'll warm again. I'll warm it out of my own heart, Martin—my heart that can't be made cold, not if he killed me. Why, last night he was just the same with me as he's been with you. I know it all—there's nothing you feel that I don't know. We'll face it together, you and me, equal—and by and by it'll be different. What we done was for love—people

give up everything for love, Martin; every day they say there's some one in the world that does it. Don't 'ee take on so—don't 'ee.

MARTIN. Twenty-five year—

JANET. Don't 'ee, my dear.

MARTIN. [*brokenly.*] I'd rather ha' died than he turn me away. I'd ha' lost everything in the world to know that I was true to 'n, like I was till you looked at me wi' the love in your face.

JANET. Everything in the world. . . I gave you joy —joy for the toil he gave you, softness for his hardness.

MARTIN. [*without bitterness.*] Ay, you were ready. And you gave the bitter with the sweet. Every time there was him to face, wi' a heart like lead.

JANET. It was a power—a power that came, stronger than us both.

MARTIN. You gave me the word.

JANET. You took away my strength. [*There is a silence. He sits looking dully at the fire.*] Any one might think me light. It isn't true. I never had any one but you, never. All my life I've been alone. When I was a little lass I wasn't allowed to play with the other bairns, and I used to make signs to tell them I wanted to. You'd never have known I loved you if I hadn't given you the word—and all our happiness, we'd never have had it—gone through our lives seeing each other, speaking words that didn't matter, and grown old and never known what was sleeping in our hearts under the dulness. I wasn't light. It was only that I couldn't be shamed for you.

MARTIN. Nay, nay, it was a great love ye gave me—you in your grand hoose wi' your delicate ways. But it's broke me.

JANET. But—it's just the same with us. Just the same as ever it was.

MARTIN. Ay. But there's no mending, wi' the likes o' him.

JANET. What's there to mend? What's there to mend except what's bound you like a slave all the years? You're free—free for the first time since you were a lad mebbee—to make a fresh start.

MARTIN. A fresh start? Wi' treachery and a lyin' tongue behind me?

JANET. With our love that nothing can break. Oh, my dear, I'll help 'ee. Morning, noon, and night I'll work for 'ee, comfort 'ee. We'll go away from it all, you and me together. We'll go to the south, where no one's heard tell of Rutherford's or any of us. I'll love 'ee so. I'll blind your eyes wi' love so that you can't look back.

MARTIN. [*looking up.*] Ay. There's that.

JANET. We'll begin again. You and me, free in the world! All the time that's been 'll be just like a dream that's past, a waiting time—the long winter afore the flowers come out white and thick on the moors—

MARTIN. He'll be lookin' to me to right ye. He'll be lookin' for that.

JANET. To right me?

MARTIN. Whatever's been, they munna say his daughter wasn't made an honest woman of. He'll be lookin' for that.

There is a silence. She draws back slowly, dropping her hands.

JANET. What's he to do with it?

He looks at her, not understanding.

Father—what's he to do with it?

MARTIN. It's for him to say—the Master.

JANET. Master!

MARTIN. What's come to ye, lass?

JANET. It's time you left off doing things because of him. You're a free man. He's not your master any more.

MARTIN. What's wrong wi' ye ?

JANET. You'll right me because of him ! You'll make an honest woman of me because he's looking for it ! He can't make you do as he bids you now. He's turned you away. He's not your master any more. He's turned you away.

MARTIN. Whisht—whisht. [*He sinks his head in his hands.*] Nay, but it's true. I'll never do his work again. But I done it too long to change—too long.

JANET. He's done with you—that's how much he cares. I wouldn't ha' let you go, not if you'd wronged me.

MARTIN. Twenty-five years ago he took me from nothing. Set me where I could work my way up—woke the lad's love in me till I would ha' died for him—willing. It's too long to change.

JANET. [*passionately.*] No—no.

MARTIN. I'll never do his work no more ; but it's like as if he'd be my master just the same—till I die.

JANET. No, no, not that ! You mustn't think like that ! You think he's great because you've seen him at the Works with the men—everybody doing as he bids them. He isn't great—he's hard and cruel—cruel as death.

MARTIN. What's took you to talk so wild ?

JANET. [*holding him.*] Listen, Martin. Listen to me. You've worked all your life for him, ever since you were a little lad. Early and late you've been at the Works —working—working for him.

MARTIN. Gladly !

JANET. Now and then he gie you a kind word—when you were wearied out mebbee—and your thoughts might ha' turned to what other men's lives were, wi' time for rest and pleasure. You didn't see through him, you wi' your big heart, Martin. You were too near to see, like I was till Mary came. You worked gladly, mebbee—but all the time your life was going into Rutherford's—

your manhood into the place he's built. He's had you, Martin—like he's had me, and all of us. We used to say he was hard and ill-tempered. Bad to do with in the house—we fell silent when he came in—we couldn't see for the little things—we couldn't see the years passing because of the days. And all the time it was our lives he was taking bit by bit—our lives that we'll never get back.

MARTIN. What's got ye to talk so wild ?

He moves from her as she talks and clings to him.

JANET. Now's our chance at last ! He's turned us both away, me as well as you. We two he's sent out into the world together. Free. He's done it himself, of his own will. It's ours to take, Martin—our happiness. We'll get it in spite of him. He'd kill it if he could.

MARTIN. Whisht, whisht ! You talk wild !

JANET. Kill it, kill it ! He's gone nigh to it as it is. [*As he makes a movement to rise.*] Martin, Martin, I love 'ee. I'm old—with the lines on my face—but it's him that's made me so. I'm bitter-tongued and sharp —it's him that's killed the sweetness in me, starved it till it died. He's taken what should have been yours to have your joy of. Stolen it—remember that—and say he's in the right ! Say it when you wish me young and bonny. Say it as I shall when I look in your face for the love that can't wake for me.

MARTIN. Bide still, bide still !

JANET. I wouldn't ha' turned against you, not if you'd nigh killed me—and you set his love up against mine ! Martin !

He gets up, not roughly, but very wearily, and moves away from her.

MARTIN. It bain't the time, it bain't the time. I been a bad servant. Faithless. We can twist words like we done all along to make it seem different, but there it stands. Leave him, when you talk to me. Leave him. . .

Mebbee he's had his mind full of a big work when you've took a spite at him.

JANET. Ah!

MARTIN. Womenfolk has their fancies, and mebbee they don't know the harshness that's in the heart of every man that fights his way i' the world when he comes into the four walls of his bit hoose of a night and sees the littleness of it. [*Standing by the table.*] I'm a plain man with no book larning, and mebbee I don't see far. But I've watched the Master year in year out, and I never seed him do a thing, nor say a thing, that he warn't in the right of. And there's not a man among them that can say different. [*Taking up his cap.*] I'll be seekin' Mr. John.

JANET. [*speaks in a dull, toneless voice, kneeling where he left her.*] He says I have to be gone by the time he come in. Where am I to go to?

He turns to look at her with a puzzled face.

MARTIN. Ay. There's that.

JANET. Where am I to go to?

MARTIN. It would be best to go a bit away—where ye wouldna' be seen for a while.

JANET. Where's a place—far enough?

MARTIN. There's Horkesley—up the line. Or Hillgarth yonder. He's not likely to be knawed thereaboots.

JANET. I haven't any money.

MARTIN *slowly counts out some coins on the table.*

MARTIN. It'll be a hard life for you, and you not used to it. Work early and late—wi' a bairn mebbee. Bitter cold i' the winter mornings wi' the fire to light and the breakfast to get, and you not used to it; we mun just bide it, the pair on us. I've saved two hundred pounds. There'll be summat to get along on whilst I look for a job. Afterwards . . we mun just bide it.

There is a silence.

JANET. [*without bitterness.*] Take up your money.

MARTIN. [*puzzled.*] It's for you, lass.

JANET. Take up your money. I'll have no need of it.

After a moment he picks it up and returns it to his pocket.

JANET. [*still kneeling.*] After all, you'd give the world to ha' been true to him—you'd give me, that you said was the world. He'd have you back if it wasn't for me. He needs you for the Works. If I was out of it—you'd go back, and people would think it all a mistake about you and me. Gossip. After a bit he'd forget and be the same. Because he needs you for the Works. Men forgive men easy where it's a woman, they say, and you could blame me, the pair of you—me that gave you the word.

MARY *comes in hurriedly.*

MARY. John's coming. He's coming across from the works.

MARTIN *turns to face the door.* JANET *does not move.*

JOHN *comes in excited and nervous.*

JOHN. [*awkwardly.*] Hullo! [*He looks at* JANET *and speaks to* MARTIN.] What are you here for?

MARTIN. Mr. John—I summat to say to you—summat I must say afore I go.

JOHN. You'd better keep quiet, I should think. Oh, I know! I've been with the Guv'nor, and he's told me plain enough. You'd better keep quiet.

MARY. John, you must listen.

JOHN. I tell you I know! The less we talk about it the better; I should think you would see that—the whole beastly, disreputable business. I can't stay—I can't talk calmly, if you can—I'm better out of it. [*He makes for the door.* MARTIN *stops him.*]

MARTIN. Mr. John. . . You been wi' the Master. What was it he told you—plain enough?

JOHN. [*significantly.*] What was it!

MARTIN. Did he tell you he'd got your metal?

JOHN *looks at him.*

JOHN. Are you mad?

MARTIN. I've give it him—I took it him this morning, and when he got it safe he turned me away. That's what I got to say.

JOHN. [*sharply.*] I don't believe it! You can't have! You haven't got the quantities!

MARTIN. The paper I took the last trial we made—

JOHN. [*his voice high-pitched with excitement.*] Don't —don't play the fool.

MARTIN. I'm speaking God's truth, and you'd best take it. Yesterday night he sent for me—and I give it him, because he asked me for it. He was i' the right, yesterday night—I don't call to mind how. And just now I give it him. That's what I got to say.

JOHN *stands staring at him, speechless.* MARTIN, *having said what he came to say, turns to go.* MARY, *suddenly realising what it all means, makes an involuntary movement to stop him.*

MARY. Martin! You've given the receipt to Mr. Rutherford! He's got it—he'll take the money from it! . . You're sure of what you say, Martin? You haven't made a mistake?

MARTIN. Mistake?

MARY. You may have got it wrong—the quantities, or whatever it is. It all depends on that, doesn't it? The least slip would put it all wrong, wouldn't it?

MARTIN. [*tired out and dull.*] There's no mistake.

MARY. [*with a despairing movement.*] Oh! you don't know what you've done!

JOHN. [*almost in tears.*] He knows well enough—you knew well enough. You're a thief—you're as bad as he is—you two behind my back. It was mine—the only chance I had. Damn him! damn him! You've done for yourself, that's one thing—you're done for!

You'll not get anything out of it now, not a farthing. He's twisted you round his finger, making you think you'd have the pickings, has he? And then thrown you out into the street for a fool and worse. You're done for! . . You've worked with me, seen it grow. I never thought but to trust you as I trusted myself—and you give it away thinking to make a bit behind my back!

MARTIN. Hard words, Mr. John, from you to me. But I done it, and I mun bide by it.

JOHN. Oh, clear out—don't talk to me. By Heaven! I'll be even with him yet.

MARTIN. I done it—but it bain't true what you think, that I looked to make a bit. I give it to him, but I had no thought o' gain by what I done. . . It's past me—it's all past me—I canna call it to mind, nor see it plain. But I know one thing, that I never thought to make a penny. [*Suddenly remembering.*] It was for Rutherford's—that's what he said—I mind it now. He said, for Rutherford's—and I seed it, yesterday night. It was as clear as day—yesterday night.

No one answers. After a moment he goes out. As the outer door closes, JOHN *suddenly goes to* RUTHERFORD'S *desk and begins pulling out drawers as if searching for something.*

MARY. [*watching him.*] What are you doing?

JOHN. Where's the key, curse it?

MARY. [*sharply.*] You can't do that!

JOHN. Do what?

MARY. Not money! You can't take his money!

JOHN. [*unlocking the cash box.*] Just be quiet, will you? He's taken all I have. [*He empties the money out on to the desk, his hands shaking.*] Fifteen—twenty—twenty-three. And it's twenty-three thousand he owes me more like, that he's stolen. Is there any more—a sixpence I've missed, that'll help to put us even? Twenty-three quid—curse him! And he stood and talked to

me not an hour ago, and all the time he knew! He's mean, that's what he is—mean and petty-minded. No one else could have done it—to go and get at Martin behind my back because he knew I was going to be one too many for him.

MARY. [*imploringly.*] Put it back! Oh, put it back!

JOHN. Oh, shut up, Mollie.

MARY. Don't take it, John.

JOHN. I tell you it's mine, by right—you don't understand. . . How am I to get along if I don't?

MARY. You've not got to do this, John—for Tony's sake. I don't care what he's done to you—you've not got to do it.

JOHN. Don't make a tragedy out of nothing. It's plain common sense! [*Angrily.*] And don't look at me as if I were stealing.

MARY. John, listen to me. I've never seriously asked you to do anything for me in my life. Just this once—I ask you to put that money back.

JOHN. My dear girl, don't be so foolish—

MARY. [*compelling him to listen to her.*] Listen! You're Tony's father! One day he'll know—some one 'll tell him that you stole money—well then, that you took money that wasn't yours, because you thought you had the right to it. What will it be like for him? Try and realise—we've no right to live as we like—you and I. He's what matters now—and we've got to live decently for him, keep straight for him—

JOHN. [*answering her like an angry child.*] Then do it! I've had enough—I'm sick of it.

JANET, *who all this time has been kneeling where* MARTIN *left her, gets up suddenly, stumbling forward as if she were blind. The other two stop involuntarily and watch her as she makes for the door, dragging her shawl over her head. As the outer door shuts on her,*

MARY *with a cry makes a half movement to follow her.*

MARY. Janet!

JOHN. Oh, let her be!

MARY. [*facing the door.*] Where's she going to?

JOHN. I'm not going to argue—I've done that too long—listening to first one and then another of you. What's come of it? You wouldn't let me go out and sell the thing while it was still mine to sell. I might have been a rich man if I'd been let to go my own way! You were always dragging me back, everything I did—with your talk. Tony—you're perpetually cramming him down my throat, till I'm sick of the very name of the poor little beggar. Give up this and give up that—I've lost everything I ever had by doing as you said. Anybody would have bought it, anybody! and made a fortune out of it—and there it is, lost! gone into Rutherford's, like everything else. Damn the place! damn it! Oh, let him wait! I'll be even with him. I came back once because I was a soft fool—this time I'll starve sooner.

MARY. You're going away?

JOHN. Yes, I'm going for good and all.

She stands looking at him.

MARY. Where are you going to?

JOHN. London—anywhere. Canada probably—that's the place to strike out on your own.

MARY. You mean to work then?

JOHN. [*impatiently.*] Of course. We can't live for ever on twenty-three quid.

MARY. What are you going to work at?

JOHN. Anything—as long as I show him—

MARY. But what—what?

JOHN. Oh, there'll be something. Damn it, Mary, what right have you to catechise?

MARY. Don't, please. I'm not catechising; I want

to know. It's a question of living. What are you going to do when you've spent what you've got?

JOHN. [*trying not to look shamefaced as he makes the suggestion.*] You could go back to Mason's for a bit—they'd be glad enough to have you.

MARY. Go back?

JOHN. [*resentfully.*] Well, I suppose you won't mind helping for a bit till I see my way. What was the screw you got?

MARY. Twenty-five.

JOHN. That would help if the worst came to the worst.

MARY. We lived on it before.

JOHN. We could put up at the same lodgings for a bit. They're cheap.

MARY. Walton Street.

JOHN. [*loudly.*] Anyway, I'm going to be even with him—I'll see him damned before I submit. After all, I'm his son—you can't count Dick; when I'm gone he'll begin to see what he's lost. Why, he may as well sell Rutherford's outright—with no one to come after him. He's worked for that—all his life! Lord! I'd give something to see his face when he comes in and asks for me!

MARY *makes no answer, as indeed there is none to make. She speaks again, not bitterly, but as one stating a fact.*

MARY. So that's your plan. [*There is a silence, in which he cannot meet her eyes. She repeats, without hope.*] John, once more—from my soul I ask you to do what I wish.

JOHN. [*impatiently.*] What about?

MARY. The money. Put it back. [*He makes a movement of desperate irritation.*] No, don't answer just for a moment. You don't know how much depends on this—for us both. Our future life—perhaps our last chance of happiness together—you don't know what it may decide.

JOHN. I tell you you don't understand. [*There is a blank silence. He moves uncomfortably.*] You can't see. What's twenty-three quid!

She makes a despairing movement.

MARY. [*in a changed voice.*] I'm afraid you'll find it rather a burden having me and Tony—while you're seeing your way, I mean.

JOHN. A burden? You? Why, you've just said you could help at Mason's—

MARY. I can't go out all day and leave Tony.

JOHN. Old Mrs. What's-'er-name would keep an eye on him.

MARY. It would free you a good deal if we weren't with you.

JOHN. Of course if you won't do anything to help. . .

MARY. [*after a pause.*] How would it be if you went alone? Then—when you've seen your way—you could write and we could come to you. Somewhere that would do for Tony—wherever it may be.

JOHN. In a month or two.

MARY. In a month or two.

JOHN. [*awkwardly.*] Well, perhaps it would be better—as you suggest it. I really don't exactly see how I'm going to manage the two of you. . . You mean—stay on here in the meantime?

MARY. Yes—stay on here.

JOHN. But the Guv'nor—I'm afraid it'll be pretty rotten for you without me.

MARY. That's all right.

JOHN. [*irritably.*] All these stupid little details—we lose sight of the real issue. That's settled, then.

MARY. Yes—settled. [*She moves, passing her hand over her eyes.*] How are you going?

JOHN. [*relieved.*] What's the time now? Close on twelve!

MARY. You're not thinking of going now—at once!

JOHN. There's the one o'clock train. I'll get old Smith to drive me to the Junction—it doesn't stop.

MARY. There won't be time to pack your things.

JOHN. Send them after me.

MARY. You've no food to take with you.

JOHN. That doesn't matter; I'll get some on the way.

MARY. [*suddenly.*] You can't go like this! We must talk—we can't end it all like this.

JOHN. I must—I didn't know it was so late—he'll be in to dinner. Cheer up, dear, it's only for a little while. I hate it too, but it wouldn't do for him to find me here. It would look—weak.

MARY. No, no—you're right—you mustn't meet—it would do no good. [*She stands undecided for a moment, then goes quickly into the hall and brings his overcoat.*] It's bitter cold. And it's an open trap, isn't it?

JOHN. I shall be all right. [*She helps him on with the coat.*] It won't be long—the time 'll pass before you know where you are; it always does—I haven't time to see the kid—it's the only thing to be done—other fellows make their fortunes every day, why shouldn't I?

MARY. [*as if he were a child.*] Yes, yes, why shouldn't you?

JOHN. Something 'll turn up—and I've got the devil's own luck at times—you'll see. I've never had a chance up to now. Some day you'll believe in me. [*He sees her face and stops short.*] Mollie—! [*Takes her in his arms. She breaks down, clinging to him.*]

MARY. Oh, my dear—if I could!

JOHN. [*moved.*] I will do it, Mollie—I swear I will. Something 'll turn up, and it'll all come right—we'll be as happy as kings, you see if we aren't. Don't, dear, it's only for a little while. . . Well then—will you come with me now?

MARY. No, no, that can't be. Go, go—he'll be in directly. Go now.

She goes with him to the outer door.

ANN RUTHERFORD *comes in on her way through the room.*

ANN. Who is it's got the door open on such a day? And the wind fit to freeze a body's bones! [*The outer door is heard closing.* MARY *comes in slowly, very pale.*] Come in, come in, for the Lord's sake. [*Looking at her.*] What be ye doing out there?

MARY. He's gone.

ANN. [*cross with the cold.*] Gone, gone, this one and that—John? And what'll he be gone for? I never seed such doings, never!

MARY. Shall I make up the fire?

ANN. And you all been and let it down. Nay, nay, I'll do it myself. It'll not be up for ten minutes or more. Such doings. What'll he be gone for?

MARY. He's had a quarrel with his father.

ANN. [*putting logs on, half-whimpering.*] A fine reason for making folks talk—bringing disgrace on the house, and all Grantley talking, and to-morrow Sunday—I never seed the like, never!

MARY. It's no use crying.

ANN. It's weel enough for you to talk—you bain't one of the family, a stranger like you. You don't know. When you've come up i' the world and are respected there's nothing pleases folk better than to find something agin you. What am I to say when I'm asked after my nevvy? Tell me that. And him gone off without so much as a change to his back—it aren't respectable. And there's Janet not ten minutes since gone along the road wi' her shawl over her head like a common working lass. Where it's to end, I'm sure I can't tell.

MARY. Perhaps it is ended.

ANN. Perhaps half the work's left and the house

upset. Susan 'll be giving notice just now—her and her goings on. As if lasses weren't hard enough to get—and there's dinner and all—

MARY. Do you want the table laid ?

ANN. It 'd help—though you've no call to do it—you got your own troubles—the little lad 'll be wanting you mebbee.

MARY. He's still asleep. I'll leave the door open and then I shall hear him. [*She opens the door, listening for a moment before she comes back into the room.*]

ANN. Janet 'll be back mebbee afore you've finished. Such doings—everything put wrong. I'll go and fetch the bread. [*She wanders out, talking as she goes.*]

MARY takes the red cloth off the table, folds it, takes the white one from the drawer in the sideboard and spreads it. As she is doing so JOHN RUTHERFORD *comes in. He stands looking at her for a moment, then comes to the fire.*

RUTHERFORD. [*as he passes her.*] Dinner's late.

MARY. [*going on with her work.*] It'll be ready in a few minutes.

RUTHERFORD. It's gone twelve.

She makes no answer. He takes his pipe off the chimney-piece and begins to fill it. As he is putting his tobacco-pouch back into his pocket his eyes fall on the table ; he stops short.

RUTHERFORD. You've laid a place short. [*Raising his voice.*] D'ye hear me, you've laid a—

She looks at him.

MARY. No.

She goes to the sideboard and spreads a cloth there. He stands motionless staring at the table.

RUTHERFORD. Gone. Trying to frighten me, is he ? Trying a bit o' bluff—he'll show me, eh ? And all I got to do is to sit quiet and wait for him to come back—that's all I got to do.

MARY. [*quietly.*] He won't come back.

RUTHERFORD. Won't he! He'll come back right enough when he feels the pinch—he'll come slinking back like a whipped puppy at nightfall, like he did afore. I know him. [*He comes to his desk and finds the open cash box.*] Who's been here? Who's been here? [*He stands staring at the box till the lid falls from his hand.*] Nay—he'll not come back, by God!

MARY. [*hopelessly.*] He thought he had the right—he believed he had the right after you'd taken what was his.

RUTHERFORD. I'd sooner have seen him in his grave.

MARY. He couldn't see.

RUTHERFORD. Bill Henderson did that because he knowed no better. And my son knowed no better, though I made a gentleman of him. Set him up. I done with him—done with him.

He drops heavily into the arm-chair beside the table and sits staring before him. After a long silence he speaks again.

RUTHERFORD. Why haven't you gone too, and made an empty house of it?

MARY. I'm not going.

RUTHERFORD. Not going, aren't you? Not till it pleases you, I take it—till he sends for you?

MARY. He won't send for me.

RUTHERFORD. [*quickly.*] Where's the little lad?

MARY. Asleep upstairs. [*After a pause she speaks again in level tones.*] I've lived in your house for nearly three months. [*He turns to look at her.*] Until you came in just now you haven't spoken to me half a dozen times. There's never a day passed but you've made me feel that I'd no right here, no place.

RUTHERFORD. You'll not die for a soft word from the likes o' me.

MARY. Now that I've got to speak to you, I want to

say that first—in case you should think I'm going to appeal to you, and in case I should be tempted to do it.

RUTHERFORD. What ha' ye got to ask of me?

MARY. To ask—nothing. I've a bargain to make with you.

RUTHERFORD. [*half truculent.*] Wi' me?

MARY. You can listen—then you can take it or leave it.

RUTHERFORD. Thank ye kindly. And what's your idea of a bargain?

MARY. A bargain is where one person has something to sell that another wants to buy. There's no love in it—only money—money that pays for life. I've got something to sell that you want to buy.

RUTHERFORD. What's that?

MARY. My son. [*Their eyes meet in a long steady look. She goes on deliberately.*] You've lost everything you have in the world. John's gone—and Richard—and Janet. They won't come back. You're alone now and getting old, with no one to come after you. When you die Rutherford's will be sold—somebody 'll buy it and give it a new name perhaps, and no one will even remember that you made it. That'll be the end of all your work. Just—nothing. You've thought of that. I've seen you thinking of it as I've sat by and watched you. And now it's come. . . Will you listen?

RUTHERFORD. Ay.

She sits down at the other end of the table, facing him.

MARY. It's for my boy. I want—a chance of life for him—his place in the world. John can't give him that, because he's made so. If I went to London and worked my hardest I'd get twenty-five shillings a week. We've failed. From you I can get what I want for my boy. I want—all the good common things: a good house, good food, warmth. He's a delicate little thing now, but he'll grow strong like other children. I want

to undo the wrong we've done him, John and I,—if I can. Later on there'll be his schooling—I could never save enough for that. You can give me all this—you've got the power. Right or wrong, you've got the power. . . That's the bargain. Give me what I ask, and in return I'll give you—him. On one condition. I'm to stay on here. I won't trouble you—you needn't speak to me or see me unless you want to. For ten years he's to be absolutely mine, to do what I like with. You mustn't interfere—you mustn't tell him to do things or frighten him. He's mine—for ten years more.

RUTHERFORD. And after that?

MARY. He'll be yours.

RUTHERFORD. To train up. For Rutherford's? You'd trust your son to me?

MARY. Yes.

RUTHERFORD. After all? After Dick, that I've bullied till he's a fool? John, that's wished me dead?

MARY. In ten years you'll be an old man; you won't be able to make people afraid of you any more.

RUTHERFORD. Ah! Because o' that? And because I have the power?

MARY. Yes. And there'll be money for his clothes —and you'll leave the Works to him when you die.

There is a silence. He sits motionless, looking at her.

RUTHERFORD. You've got a fair notion of business—for a woman.

MARY. I've earned my living. I know all that that teaches a woman.

RUTHERFORD. It's taught you one thing—to have an eye to the main chance.

MARY. You think I'm bargaining for myself?

RUTHERFORD. You get a bit out of it, don't you?

MARY. What?

RUTHERFORD. A roof over your head—the shelter of a good name—your keep—things not so easy to come

by, my son's wife, wi' a husband that goes off and leaves you to live on his father's charity. [*There is a pause.*]

MARY. [*slowly.*] There'll be a woman living in the house—year after year, with the fells closed round her. She'll sit and sew at the window and see the chimneys flare in the dark; lock up, and give you the keys at night—

RUTHERFORD. You've got your bairn.

MARY. Yes, I've got him! For ten years. [*They sit silent.*] Is it a bargain?

RUTHERFORD. Ay. [*She gets up with a movement of relief. As he speaks again she turns, facing him.*] You think me a hard man. So I am. But I'm wondering if I could ha' stood up as you're standing and done what you've done.

MARY. I love my child. That makes me hard.

RUTHERFORD. I used to hope for my son once, like you do for yours now. When he was a bit of a lad I used to think o' the day when I'd take him round and show him what I had to hand on. I thought he'd come after me—glad o' what I'd done. I set my heart on that. And the end of it's just this—an empty house—we two strangers, driving our bargain here across the table.

MARY. There's nothing else.

RUTHERFORD. You think I've used him badly? You think I've done a dirty thing about this metal?

MARY. It was his.

RUTHERFORD. I've stolen it behind his back—and I'm going to make money out of it?

MARY. I don't know—I don't know.

RUTHERFORD. It'll come to your son.

MARY. Yes.

RUTHERFORD. Because I done that he'll have his chance, his place i' the world. What would ha' gone to the winds, scattered and useless, 'll be his. He'll come on, young and strong, when my work's done, and Ruther-

ford's 'll stand up firm and safe out o' the fight and the bitterness—Rutherford's that his grandfather gave his life to build up.

MARY. [*stopping him with a gesture.*] Hush!

RUTHERFORD. What is it? [*They both listen.*] The little lad. He's waking!

MARY *runs out. The room is very silent as* RUTHERFORD *sits sunk in his chair, thinking.*

THE END

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